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THE EGERTON STANDARD

BY

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CHAPTER I.

THE road was very lonely. The ruddy-gold sunshine of the late afternoon shot in long rays between the trees and overlaid the clay surface with light, but discovered no marks of wheels except those fresh tracks which followed the automobile and stopped with it. There had been no interruptions to the harangue of the man standing in the road; nothing to indicate this strip of forest was within a few miles of the cities of Jersey and New York. And the man in the motor-car had listened immovably, in silent acknowledgment of that power of compulsion in the pistol held by the other.

It had been a long speech, vehemently egotistical and bitter with self-pity. The speaker was young—a thin, shabby, sallow youth, with an overhanging brow contradicted by his weak chin; a face where obstinacy and irresolution warred ruinously.

"I'd almost rather kill you, anyhow," he finished, his thin voice rising; "but I guess you won't wait for that! Are you going to take me back, Mr. Egerton?"

The man in the car moved for the first time, lifting his arm from the steering-wheel on which he had been leaning.

"No," he returned composedly.

Checked, the other stared at him.

"I tell you I'll kill you unless you do!" he cried.

"I heard you."

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"You think I won't do it? I tell you I'd like to do it—I'd like to!"

"Oh, no, you would not," Egerton contradicted. "No man in our state of civilization likes to kill another. We have lost the capacity for it. You might commit murder, but you would not like it. Besides, there are consequences."

"Why won't you take me back, then?" the other demanded, weakly furious. "You turned me out like a dog—after promising me so much! I've got a right to kill you, if you won't take me back."

"I will tell you why, Germain, if you want me to repeat what we both know," Egerton responded. There was neither obstinacy nor irresolution in his face, but the settled determination of a man who was accustomed to consider himself and to be considered just and absolute. His calm self-confidence was not free from a suspicion of arrogance. "How old are you? Twenty? I am twelve years older than you. Because your father was once my tutor, I took you into my office as my secretary, and promised to advance you, if we agreed. Last winter I found you were engaged in an elaborate system of garbling my accounts, to save yourself the trouble of work you were paid to do. I discharged you. Well?"

"I never stole from you," Germain cried savagely.

"No, you lied to me," was the cutting reply. "And I would as soon keep a thief about me as a liar."

"You turned me out in the middle of winter——"

"In February, and I gave you three months' wages. You could have found work."

"I spent all long ago. I had to live. When I did look for work, every one wanted to know who employed me last; and when they heard your name, and that I had no recommendation, they would n't take me. You turned me out to starve. Now you'll take me back, or I'll kill you! No one will find you until to-morrow—perhaps not for days. I'll have time to get away. Unless"—he paused before a sudden apprehension—"unless you told some one you were coming here?"

A path of escape opened, but Mark Egerton did not take it. His eyes slightly narrowed; he studied his gaunt, scarcely sane young antagonist.

"If I said that I had, you would take my word for it, Germain?"

"I—yes."

"Yet you do not understand why I discharged you?"

"Will you take me back?" snarled Germain, sallow with rage and shame, levelling the pistol in his shaking hand. "It's the last time!"

"No," said Egerton.

His broad chest offered a fair mark as he leaned back in the seat, his motor-coat falling open. He did not believe that Germain would have the courage to shoot. There was neither fear nor anger in Egerton's glance, as he watched the other man.

Perhaps it was the challenge of that curiosity that struck a spark from the crumbling substance of Germain's resolution. He fired three times in rapid succession.

The first two shots took effect, the last went wide, as Egerton started to his feet, then fell back into the cushioned seat.

"I did n't think you had it in you, Germain!" he panted, raising his left hand to the crimson spot that sprang into view against his shoulder. His right arm hung at his side, a red line staining the sleeve.

Germain made no answer, staring with lowered head at the man before him, while shaken by a succession of nervous tremors. There was not remorse in his expression, nor triumph; merely stunned consternation.

"I will give you another chance," Egerton offered presently. "Drive me to the nearest place where there is a surgeon, and I will make no charge against you. Here"—he put his fingers into a pocket—"I will add to that enough money to enable you to get away from the neighborhood. Unless"—as the other did not speak—"you mean to finish me."

A strong shudder ran over the youth. Suddenly dropping the pistol, he turned and fled, crashing through the light undergrowth and striking against trees and bushes in his frenzy of haste to escape.

Abandoned, Egerton lay still for a few moments, then aroused himself and put his finger on the button of the car's electric horn. A long, raucous wail shattered the forest hush. Two miles the sound would carry, according to the signal's manufacturers. Here, on the heights of the Palisades, that might be necessary.

Approaching steps through the woods first suggested the danger that Germain, alarmed by the horn, might return to silence the signal and the signaller. Egerton drew himself erect in the seat, his finger still pressing the button.

"Perhaps you might shut off your klaxon," spoke a voice behind him; a voice singularly agreeable in its cool freshness and youth. "If you are calling for help, I am all there is likely to be."

Egerton turned eagerly, and encountered the meditative dark eyes of a slight, chestnut-haired, rather shabby young man who stood in the road.

"I have been shot," Egerton explained concisely. "Can you drive the machine to some place where I can find a surgeon?"

"Shot?" The dark eyes lightened, appraising him. "I should say so! You need the surgeon before the drive."

"I know that. Can you——"

"I'm not qualified, but I've seen some such work done. We will have to try it."

As he spoke, the young man slipped off his coat and rolled back his sleeves with a delightful readiness and cordiality altogether surprising to the colder Egerton. It was a friend, not a passer-by, who swung

himself into the automobile beside the wounded man and took charge of him.

Egerton submitted with the passivity of growing weakness. Indeed, there was skill in the deftness with which his motor-coat was removed and the undergarments cut and laid back.

"Where do you carry your emergency equipment?" was the first query.

"I do not carry one," the patient confessed.

"Then you had better get one. I've seen a man's life saved by himself, after a bad fall, with a strip of linen as a tourniquet. Have you any tire-tape in your kit, and clean cotton-waste?"

"Yes, both. But——"

"My name is Lauria, Roger Lauria."

"I am Mark Egerton, of Egerton, New Jersey. If I get beyond identifying myself, you will find cards and letters in my coat there."

"The police are going to ask something more," Lauria drily reminded him. "I suppose you hardly shot yourself, nor did I do it; and there appears to be no one else present. Steady, please, while I tighten this."

Egerton's straight brows contracted. For the moment he answered nothing, considering.

Lauria had underrated himself. With the cotton-waste and strips of handkerchief, held in place by adhesive tape, he quickly improvised dressings that checked the flow of blood from the two wounds. Walking back a hundred feet, he brought water from one of the many brooks that thread their way through the cliffs to the Hudson River, far below. On feeling the revivifying coolness, Egerton glanced up at his nurse and smiled.

"You are qualified as a doctor," he complimented. "Or perhaps you are one?"

"No, not I! But I've seen enough such work done, although I never before saw a bullet-wound."

"Why, what are you?"

The question was put with Egerton's usual assured directness. Lauria slightly raised his eyebrows, as if before a violation of what he considered courtesy.

"I have witnessed some aviation," he returned, with marked reserve. "Shall you mind if I tie you in the car? The going may be bad."

"Of course not. It is fifteen miles to my home; can you take me there?"

"I can, but I should rather not."

"Why?"

Lauria started the motor and took the driver's seat, his sensitive, dark face touched with a smile half-ironic.

"Because there is a surgeon nearer, Mr. Egerton. Has it occurred to you that people might be interested in the spectacle of my driving across-country with you shot and tied in the car?"

"I could explain."

"Perhaps," Lauria qualified significantly.

Egerton said nothing, protest silenced by the sharp anguish sent through him by a jerk of the automobile, and his succeeding faintness. He had fancied his wounds trivial, but now doubt gripped him. He compelled himself to clearness of thought.

"I want this kept out of the newspapers," he stated presently. "My parents are travelling abroad. My mother is not strong, and some garbled account of this might reach her and shock her dangerously. It will be time enough to bring the police into this if I die—and I do not expect to."

"Few of us do," returned Lauria. "You"—with a keen glance—"you want to shield the one who shot you?"

"No," Egerton contradicted, his gray eyes hard with contempt. "He is an employee who was discharged for lying; it is a matter of indifference to me whether he is in prison or out. But if he is arrested and tried, the whole affair will be dragged through the newspapers. However, you must be protected. If there is any question, I was shot by Lewis Germain, formerly my secretary."

Lauria bent his head, gravely accepting the confidence.

"Just get me home," Egerton forced himself to continue. "But if——"

The forest suddenly seemed to fade from his sight; he had an impression that the automobile was sinking.

When he reopened his eyes, he naturally completed the sentence interrupted by the attack of giddiness.

"——if I die, my father will hunt the right man down, if it takes a lifetime and a fortune."

The forest of rustling leaves and checkered sun and shade had given place to walls. The face that bent above him was framed in Lauria's bright chestnut hair, and had Lauria's large velvet-dark eyes, yet——

"I beg your pardon," Egerton apologized dreamily, striving to rise. "You see, I thought you were a man—I was a bit confused, back there!"

The dark eyes grew yet softer and deeper; warm as a hearth-fire glows warm, ruddy depth within depth. And warm color suddenly flushed the face with rose—no pale tint, but the deep rose of a Jacqueminot. The first Lauria appeared beside the delicate replica of himself.

"Lie still, Mr. Egerton," he counselled. "A surgeon will be here directly. You are in my house—it was the nearest."

Egerton made an effort.

"Send for my manager—Black," he urged. "He'll know."

CHAPTER II.

MARIA CLELIA ENDICOTT DE LAURIA rested her dimpled young elbows on the breakfast-table and looked across at her brother.

"He is very rich, your Mr. Egerton," she observed, rather in assertion than question.

Roger set down his fine old cup of cracked porcelain, his eyes meeting the girl's with mingled curiosity and amusement.

"So they say, little sister. Why, might one ask?"

"Because he has so many things," was the prompt reply. "Oh, I have watched, from the cliff where no one can see me! It is like a play, now he is well enough to take the air; it is even a pageant. First appears the Japanese servant and arranges a chair under the trees. He disappears, and returns with a table, on which he proceeds to place a tray of little glasses, cordials, books, papers, cigars—everything! Then a pause: enter Mr. Egerton, pale, interesting, leaning on the doctor's arm, or yours. More activity of the Japanese, more cushions, more rugs. Presently appears that superintendent from his factories; reports, offers papers to be signed, takes notes of orders, and retires in favor of a stenographer, to whom His Serene Highness dictates a few letters. After which, Mr. Egerton sets up a leather picture-frame and looks at it all day."

"Clelia!"

She laughed at him, tilting her small, defiant head, around which she wound her broad and shining braids of hair like a Greek girl.

"Oh, he does not know I exist, sir! I have merely taken my sewing to the rocks above the lodge, which musty building you have bestowed upon him as a dwelling. That is, he does not know I exist unless he remembers seeing two of you, the afternoon when you brought him there and I met you. Do I look like a man, then?"

Mock indignation was in the query. But indeed the sister and brother resembled each other as much as a young girl can resemble a young man. They were of the one type, as types are seen preserved in certain European families where race and caste have been guarded for centuries. No student could mistake a Bourbon for a Stuart, for example. The recurrent characteristics are plain in a study of portraits taken through generations, in spite of individual differences in appearance. So these two were of one house: the curve of their dark eyebrows, a noble moulding of brow and head, and a certain look of blended reserve and deeply ardent feeling stamped them.

But just now Roger's face was troubled, while Clelia's rippled with mirth. He glanced around the large, faded room before answering; a dining-room designed for the days when banquets were given in homes instead of hotels, and hospitality was comprehended in the house.

"The Egertons founded and own all the village of Egerton. All the inhabitants work in their huge factory. It is a model town; almost like an English village, I believe. It is the father who made the fortune and business, but he practically has put it all into his son's hands. They have the reputation of being strong, clever, hard men, honorable to a quixotic degree; who are never unjust and seldom gentle."

Surprised in her turn, the laughter deepened in her eyes.

"How much you know, Roger!"

"I have talked with his superintendent," Lauria confessed. "He likes to talk, and I——"

"Like to listen," she promptly completed. "Did I not say that Mr. Egerton was interesting?"

"The successful always are," he said, with a short, impatient sigh.

"He did not make his success; he inherited it. You are making yours," she answered with swift tact. "Yes, you *are*. For you to earn enough money to support yourself and Father and me, just with your pencil and without special training—that is wonderful!"

Roger bent his head as if to avoid her eyes; a slow flush reddened his clear, dark skin. After a moment he rose.

"I must go," he said. "There is an appointment I must keep. Do not expect me until evening."

"About the sketches, of course."

"Of course," he echoed mechanically.

In spite of his professed haste, he remained standing beside his chair.

"Clelia—do not watch Egerton too much."

Startled, her color rose with the sensitive readiness that distinguished them both.

"Why?" she asked frankly and proudly.

He again glanced around the once-magnificent room, then down at the table, where exquisite china was set forth upon a coarse, patched cloth, and a bubble-frail vase of Venetian glass held a few field-flowers and autumn leaves.

"We are why. Wait until I mend our tapestries."

She understood, her pride twin with his.

"We are we," she retorted. "But he shall never see me, or come here, certainly. I only watched because—because it was all so different. You know I never go anywhere—and there is so little to watch."

But she did not say that she would go no more to the cliff above the lodge.

After Roger had left, she went out into the large, cavernous kitchen, with its rows of unused pantries and huge, unused range. In one corner an old woman was busied at the small oil-stove that served the family needs.

"The chocolate is ready?" Clelia questioned, taking a worn silver

tray and proceeding to arrange a breakfast service upon it. "Such a day, Martha dear! Surely your rheumatism is better to-day?"

"A day for young folks," the old woman grumbled. "There will be frost in two weeks. The chocolate has been standing; the master will have waited. Already Mr. Roger was late and angered him."

Clelia cast a dismayed regard at the clock on the wall, hurriedly set the chocolate-pot on the tray, and went out. In the hall she paused to gather two scarlet geraniums that nodded outside a window. One she laid on the folded napkin, the other she tucked in her braids above one small ear.

All up the stairs she climbed oval windows were set, looking across the sweep of mountain and distant river. Her eager gaze had miles to quest over. The October air danced with sunlight as champagne dances with amber bubbles, and was as heady. Carefully holding the tray level, the girl finally stopped altogether, drawing a deep breath.

"Such a day!" she exclaimed, half-aloud. "After all, he will never know; soon he will be well and go away. And he looks always in the picture-frame! *Once more—*"

It was almost at the moment of Clelia's decision that Mark Egerton waved away his stenographer and set up the three-sided leather frame upon his table, in the plot of lawn behind the lodge. As always, he opened a book and laid it upon his knee, then fixed his gaze and his attention upon the standing picture-case. Only, it did not contain a picture.

Perhaps it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that Egerton had experienced as much astonishment as pain in enduring his illness. He had never been ill; he had held the healthy man's half-scornful incredulity of illness. And to be thrown so low by a Germain!

He bore a good deal of suffering in grim silence, but he was not a patient invalid. And as he improved, to disgusted astonishment succeeded disgusted ennui. He had been in that condition of mind when, ten days before this morning, his physician had established him in the garden to take the air. From that condition he had been definitely rescued by a mirror-backed tray.

The sun-bubbles continued to dance in the amber October haze, a pair of squirrels chattered and frolicked along the edge of the little cliff that overhung the garden. Egerton's gaze persisted in fidelity to the leather-framed object of Clelia's curiosity. Occasionally he would slightly change its position. Once when the Japanese approached on some errand, his master abruptly swept the case shut; only to set it up again after the man's departure.

The frame contained a triplicate mirror. It reflected a section of yellow-gray cliff, a mass of tree-branches clothed in red and yellow foliage, and a vagrant sunbeam. And as a little clock on the table chimed the quarter-hour, into the reflected picture stole a flash of pink.

Clelia de Lauria seated herself on the old stone bench, set her sewing-basket on her knee, and took forth the cravat she was designing for Roger. But instead of sewing she rested her chin in her small palm and looked down at the gentleman in the garden below. Yes, he sat gazing into the picture-frame, as usual; his head half turned from her and affording an interesting study of his profile. Her red mouth curled like the petal of a flower, her eyes warmed to blended laughter and exasperation. Of whom was that absorbing portrait? What must a girl do or be to win such devotion as that? From a man like Egerton, too! The laughter died out of her expression and left it purely wistful.

"I am like the *Lady of Shalott*," she mused. "I sit apart in my enchanted tower and watch the reflections of the people who go past on the highroad. Only, there is no Sir Lancelot for me to look at and break the spell. To be sure, I have looked at Mr. Egerton; but no webs have flown apart nor magic glasses shattered—and I certainly shall not die and drift down the brook into his garden. And he is by no means dressed in jewelled armor; although he looks very nice."

It had never occurred to her as strange that, when all the paraphernalia of illness was about him, Egerton never had allowed himself an invalid's latitude of costume. Always he was carefully dressed, as if to appear in his office, even when obviously ill and in pain.

"He has had a bad time," she told herself, taking up the cravat. "Roger said he suffered a great deal. But now he is much better. Soon he can go home."

The sharp crack of a snapping stick startled her out of revery. She turned her head, then sprang up as she saw the shabby figure of a man gliding away among the tree-trunks.

She had forgotten the contents of her lap. The sewing-basket tilted, slipped—a whole cascade of bright spools, needle-balls, scissors, and thimble poured over the little cliff and rattled into the garden below. Egerton rose impetuously, overturning on his part the leather frame and a whole row of glasses and decanters.

Clelia's impulse was toward flight, but it was too late. Her attempt to capture the basket had carried her to the edge of the cliff, and she found herself looking down into Egerton's gray eyes.

His remark was more disconcerting than the discovery.

"I have been hoping this would happen, for a week," he said.

Native dignity rescued her. Moreover, she had no time to analyze his statement.

"I am sorry to have startled you," she regretted distantly. "My basket slipped from my hand. Good-morning."

"You will allow me to gather up your things, Miss Lauria?"

"It does not matter."

But it did matter, and her slight hesitation gave an opportunity to

a man used to taking his own way. Egerton had no idea of permitting this visionary dryad to evade him so readily.

"Surely I need not introduce myself, after the hospitality your brother has shown me?" he questioned. "Please do not refuse this small service where I owe so much."

He was quite unconscious of the imperative note in his speech. The girl did not resent it; on the contrary, it pleased her indecision. She sat down.

Egerton had overrated his strength. When he stooped to pick up the basket, the sharp stab of resulting pain drained his face of color. But he neither rang for his servant nor pleaded weakness. Instead, he changed his method; in place of stooping, he knelt on one knee to recover the scattered articles. Even so, he had no breath for speech until the task was ended.

"I will come up to see if the tally is complete," he said, when he rose.

"It will not be," she returned. "My thimble fell down a crack in the rock. The gnomes have it."

"I might dynamite the rock."

"Please, no! It was only a celluloid thimble, that I bought from a peddler because it was red."

Egerton was already coming toward her, around the end of the cliff. It was not a long distance, but it was steep and much farther than he had yet walked alone. When the two stood opposite each other, all constraint vanished before his obvious exhaustion. Clelia sprang forward, her delicate dark face suddenly anxious.

"Please sit down!" she exclaimed. "Oh, you should not have come here—you are ill!"

Egerton shook his head in denial, but nevertheless he very willingly sank down on the bench beside her.

"Next week I will do better," he apologized, after a moment. "Will you count the spools?"

She accepted the basket, but set it down to face him impulsively.

"We are cruel, we others!" she flashed. "I am cruel! I knew it hurt you to pick up those things, yet I let you—I watched to see if you would keep on."

Egerton fixed his eyes on her in an astonished pleasure with which her beauty had nothing to do. He was not imaginative, but he had the sensation of being confronted with some ardent, fierce, yet fine lady of old Spain or Italy; of the days when melting tenderness and purity were not incompatible with flashes of savagery, and a white lily might sheathe a steel sword.

"Why not?" he countered. "You want no cravens in your high places. Did I pass the test?"

Her eyes did not fall, but the rich color flushed her cheeks.

"Yes," she answered, and turned away her head.

"Thank you. You see, I have led too prosaic a life to have had much practice. If I had known I was to meet a princess of chivalry in the forest, I should have tried to qualify."

"To qualify?"

"Why, yes. Instead of dropping her glove into the lion-pit, she dropped her work-basket into the garden, but the principle is the same. I stabbed myself on a needle, by the way; do I receive credit for that?"

She dimpled involuntarily. It was a curious interview between these two, who had never before spoken to each other, yet who might almost have been said to have passed the last ten days together.

"You are forgiving, Mr. Egerton. I might have made you ill."

"It would have been worth while," he said meditatively, and quite honestly. "Other people have adventures; I have always been too busy. Do you know how I spend my life, Miss Lauria? I make soap."

"You mind that?"

"No, I like it. I make good soap."

Her glance sprang to meet his with the luminous earnestness that he had learned to know in Roger Lauria.

"That is worth while—to make something well!" she exclaimed. "And—to succeed. We are old. For centuries we have made nothing; we were of those for whom things are made. Now we rust away, we accomplish nothing."

"Pardon me—*we*?"

She made a slight gesture, half-weary, half-proud.

"We of my house. Roger and I are Americans, but our name was one of Spain's greatest six centuries ago. The first Roger de Lauria conquered Sicily and gave it to his king."

Recollections of half-forgotten history stirred in Egerton's mind. He had guessed rightly, then, the atmosphere for this girl; slender, yet deep-bosomed, deep-eyed, vividly alive.

Before he found words to answer her, the snapping of underbrush came clearly to their ears, followed by the unmistakable sounds of some one moving through the tangled park, not far away. Clelia uttered a faint exclamation, recalled to thought of the man she had seen.

"Who is it?" Egerton questioned.

"I do not know. A man who is creeping through the park. I had forgotten, but that was how I dropped the basket: he startled me."

"Some tramp," Egerton said, rising. "I will send him off."

"No, no! You are not fit," she protested, dismayed. "He can do no harm; let him go on."

Egerton smiled.

"I shall not fight him," he reassured. "Please wait here."

He did not stay for her assent. Checked, the girl stood an instant, then sprang noiselessly in pursuit.

The man in the underbrush was on his hands and knees at the edge of the cliff, staring down into the little square garden below. He was rather a boy than a man, whose weak, haggard face was now tensely eager as he looked down at the empty chair beside the invalid's table. But he heard the step behind him and started up, to confront Egerton.

The two regarded each other in a silence filled with many thoughts.

"So, Germain, you came back," the older man observed. "What for?"

The other wet his dry lips.

"There was nothing in the papers," he said hoarsely. "I had n't money to get farther away than New York. I—I had to know whether you were alive—I walked back."

"Decidedly alive. You blundered, as usual."

"I'm glad," Germain stammered tremulously, almost imploringly. "I—I was crazy! Give me another chance, Mr. Egerton. Don't give me up. Let me go, sir. I've hidden, and nearly starved—let me go."

"Am I keeping you?"

"But the police——"

"If I have not already informed the police, it is for reasons of my own," Egerton coldly returned. "Those reasons have not changed. You can go."

"Mr. Egerton, I—I have n't a cent. I have n't slept in a bed for nights; and I'm hungry."

"That," Egerton stated definitely, "is your own affair."

When he turned, after watching the cringing figure out of sight, Clelia was behind him.

"I am going," she said hurriedly, veiling her dark eyes from him.

"You have been very good; I thank you."

Egerton looked at her keenly.

"Something is wrong. What have I done?" he asked.

"Nothing; nothing that was not your right. I was told this morning that you were always just—and never gentle. I understand now."

The indictment was unexpected. He had never considered himself in that light, but he recognized the portrait.

"If you concede the justice, I cannot complain," he submitted. "But I hope the rest is not quite so bad! You heard me with Germain; well, I allowed him to go. Was that so cruel?"

"No, but hard!" her retort leaped. "We can be cruel; you are hard. Mr. Egerton, in your place, I should either have sent to prison the man who shot me, or have warmed and fed him."

With the last word she would have bowed and left him, but he was before her.

"Forgive me, Miss Lauria; you must not go alone through the woods while that maniac is there."

"I am not afraid."

"But I am. My motor-car is here; let my man drive you home. Why should you refuse?" as her lips parted.

She did not know how to answer him, or why the offer that seemed so natural to him shattered her ideas of convention.

"I will explain to your brother," he added.

She recalled Roger's parting injunction to avoid Mark Egerton. Yet, after all, why? Never in all her monotonous life had come such an adventure; why not accept its fulness, since probably there never would come such another? Without spoken reply, she slowly turned and walked beside her escort down the slope.

Egerton studied her breathlessly; with the acute attention of one who finds near him a thing only glimpsed afar. He liked everything about her; her alien romance, her fearless directness, even her difficulty of approach. But her simple, cheap, pink cotton frock seemed to him absurdly incongruous as a dress for this regal young beauty; absurd as the idea of a celluloid thimble upon her small, taper finger. He was by nature quick in decision, and he had been half in love before the sewing-basket rolled to his feet. Now the fancy-vapor was crystallizing.

In the garden down at which Clelia had so often gazed, they stopped. Egerton placed a chair, and his guest took it passively. He touched a bell on the table.

"Suki, have Ferguson bring the car to the door," he said to the Japanese who appeared. "A tramp has been seen in the park, and Miss Lauria must not cross it alone. And bring my overcoat."

"You should not go out," Clelia objected. "You have not yet."

"I have not yet," he admitted. "But that was less because I could not, than because I did not want to."

Some significance in his accent caught her curiosity.

"You do not care for driving, perhaps?"

"Not for that reason. When I am able to go driving, I shall have no excuse for remaining longer in Mr. Lauria's house—and garden."

Confused without knowing why, she turned to the table beside her. Her glance fell on the three-sided leather frame that had so long puzzled and challenged her interest.

The mirror faced toward her. And as she gazed in dawning consternation, she saw a reflection of the brown and gold trees fringing the upper cliff, the gray corner of a stone bench; the bench where she had sat in fancied concealment day after day. "I have been hoping this would happen for a week," he had said when her basket fell.

Egerton rose with her as she swayed to her feet, her face crimson. Too late he saw the mirror and put out his hand to close it.

The action was a confession. Recognizing the fact, he forestalled her anger with apology.

"Forgive me! I first saw you by chance ten days ago, Miss Lauria. After that, I was lost. I remembered seeing you when your brother brought me here. When I found your favorite nook was up there, I—well, I was guilty of watching you. I had no right, I deserve all you may say—forgive me."

She faced him fairly, in spite of her scarlet shame.

"You had the right, since, in watching me, you must have seen that I looked at you. But I never will forgive you, never!"

He stepped before her as she would have fled into the park.

"The servants," he quietly reminded her.

She saw Suki advancing with the coat, and through the gates beyond glimpsed the chauffeur beside his car. Her pride alarmed in a new cause, she paused, steadying herself.

"They must not see you running from me," Egerton gravely urged. "Let my man take you home. Surely I have no need to say that I will not now annoy you with my escort."

Her head still held high, she turned away. She had no weapon against this attack, whose wisdom was so obvious.

Egerton walked silently beside her to the automobile. When she had entered it, he held out to her the leather-framed mirror.

"If I may not be pardoned, I may be punished," he said. "I shall not buy another."

Taken by surprise, she faltered, meeting his glance with shamed, lovely eyes. Suddenly she recalled the fixed attention he had given that mirror; the mirror she had fancied a portrait, but which had shown her own image. The flattery of that tribute was honest.

"There will be nothing for one to reflect," she signified, but she took the glass.

"I accept the rebuke. Yet now a reflection would not content me."

There was no misunderstanding the seriousness of his gray eyes, nor his quiet resolution. Clelia leaned back in the car, averting her face while he gave the directions to the chauffeur.

The forgotten sewing-basket was brought to its mistress an hour later by Suki, who started flying echoes in the great, lonely house by tugging valiantly at the rusted bell of the front door. Accompanying the returned article was a mass of red roses which Egerton must have sent far to find, tied with more heavy satin ribbon than the frugal Clelia had ever owned for her own adornment.

The flowers were not returned. Suki never knew the reason for the lavish reward he received upon coming back to his master with empty hands.

Mark Egerton and Roger de Lauria had become excellent friends during the four weeks since Germain had shot his former employer. They interested each other, although neither was a man who gave friendship readily or lightly. At least a part of every day, the young host was a guest in the lodge.

The evening after the encounter with Clelia, during such a visit, Egerton produced a diminutive morocco case.

"I had the honor of meeting Miss Lauria yesterday," he said. "By the way, have I not blundered and should it not be de Lauria?"

"It should, but the *de* sounds like an affectation in America, and I drop it in casual use," Roger explained. "You met my sister, you say?"

"Yes; she was walking in your park when the fellow who attacked me came prowling about. Fortunately, I saw him, and persuaded Miss de Lauria to take the car home instead of walking through the woods. But a thimble rolled from the basket she carried, and was lost in the garden here. Will you permit me the great pleasure of replacing it? It is outrageous that I should impose myself and my homicidal employees upon you this way!"

"The man who shot you!" exclaimed Roger. "He came back?"

"Oh, merely to see if I were alive. Thank you"—as the other mechanically accepted the box. "My mother is in Italy, Lauria, or she would call upon your sister. As it is, will you not both waive ceremony and consent to drive with me to-morrow?"

Astonished, Roger demurred.

"I am afraid——"

Egerton interrupted with his sudden smile.

"Are you going to leave me crushed under a weight of hospitality that I may not return ever so slightly, Lauria? Besides—I am lonely."

The tact that assumed a debt instead of imposing one shamed Roger into a complaisance he had not intended and made refusal ungracious. And the drive would be a rare, an unprecedented pleasure for Clelia.

"Thank you. If my sister is not engaged——" he slowly yielded. He looked rather curiously at the dainty morocco case in his hand, but he was too well-bred to open it.

"I hope she will not refuse me," Egerton answered. "Pray, say so, for me."

"Certainly. Egerton, you have met many men; what is your idea of a coward? A man who is afraid?"

The question was put abruptly; with a sombre force that seemed to have burst through restraints. It struck in Egerton recollection of the girl who had watched him painfully gathering the contents of her basket, "to see if he would keep on."

"Not always," he replied thoughtfully. "I should rather say, a man who lets his fear hinder what he has to do."

Roger's sensitive face lighted and cleared.

"That, yes! To keep on—that is something! I could not bear—My father was a soldier, you know. He came to New York nearly forty years ago, a veteran of war in his twenty-sixth year; his health shaken by wounds, possessing the right to wear a dozen decorations, his name everywhere honored—and an exile from his own country. He had fought on the losing side. He meant to return when his strength permitted. But time escaped; the daughter of a New York house of merchant-princes fell in love with him and he with her. He never went back."

Keenly interested, Egerton listened.

"Then you are American by blood as well as by birth," he commented.

"On my mother's side, yes. This house and place were hers. There was a porter in this old lodge then; they say the place throbbed with gayety and hospitality, like a feverish pulse. For it was a fever. One day the fortune was gone; swept away overnight in a great panic that shook New York. My mother died soon after, when Clelia was born."

"Your father?"

"Returned to the only profession he recognized. He entered the American army. But he was again wounded, in Mexico, and compelled to retire forever. Never omit the *de* from our name should you chance to meet him, Egerton. He is punctilious to the last degree, and the strictest disciplinarian I can conceive."

The story admitted no comment. Egerton was silent, thinking of his own father; a fighter also, but on how different a field! And he preferred him in his heart to the gentleman who could claim the title of cousin from the King of Spain.

He did not guess at all the significance to himself of Roger de Lauria's story, or the overthrow it held for his own honor.

Presently Roger rose and took his leave, when Egerton noticed for the first time his pallor and the drawn lines of fatigue about his mouth and eyes.

"You look tired, Lauria," he observed, with curt sympathy.

"I am. Good-night," said Roger, as briefly.

Clelia was in her room when her brother reached home. She came to the door in a blue kimono over her night-dress to receive the box and the message he brought. The lamp she carried lighted softly her flushed young face and broad braids of shining hair; the thin, cheap material of her robes fell into graceful folds about her supple body. Looking at her, Roger saw her with new eyes and a new sense of guardianship.

"What is in the box?" he asked.

Clelia readily opened the case, and they looked together at the toy it contained: a thimble of rose-red coral carved like lace. Egerton was

too fine to offend by a trace of costly metals or jewels; the value of the gift was masked by its simplicity.

"It is pretty," Roger commented. "Will you go for the drive tomorrow? I suppose you can hardly accept this, and refuse."

"No; I will go," Clelia murmured.

She was quivering with excitement. With feminine unreason, she forgave Egerton his fault, not because she had provoked and originated it, but because he had remembered her thimble was red.

When the door had closed, she crossed to the table and set the coral thimble beside the roses. The leather-framed mirror confronted her; dimpling and smiling, she bent to see her face reflected. How had she looked to him, she wondered? At least, he had cared to watch!

CHAPTER III.

THE drive was enchantingly successful. The ready color flooded Clelia's face when Egerton thanked her for accepting the thimble, but some quality in his manner dispelled the last constraint between them.

When they passed the lodge on the return, Egerton invited his guests to enter for a Japanese tea. Suki served them with a feast as daintily exotic as the eastern fairies' banquets of perfume. Naturally, Egerton had permitted no more additions to the faded old furnishings of the lodge than absolute necessity demanded; to do more would have seemed to reflect upon his hosts. But even so, the place had caught an atmosphere of freshness and luxury. The two De Laurias felt it, and Clelia breathed it like a native air.

"I am so much better that I shall have no excuse for remaining here longer," Egerton regretted, when his guests rose to leave. "I must go home."

"I hope you will stay as long as you find the lodge comfortable. It was unused until you came, and will be so after you go," Roger answered, but he regarded Egerton a trifle oddly. "I know you are a man of many affairs; no doubt you are anxious to get back to them."

Egerton met the regard squarely.

"I am engaged in the most important affair of my life," he asserted.

When a man has reached thirty years of age without trifling away his emotions in sentimental episodes, love comes to him as a serious thing. It came so to Mark Egerton, with the first romance of his crowded, practical life. Without a thought of being unkind, his father had so required of Mark his own enormous industry, that the weeks following Germain's assault were almost Egerton's first leisure.

He was debarred from the usual methods of courtship by the Laurias' aloofness and reserve. He could not meet Clelia in general society. Delicate sounding convinced him that he would not be allowed to call

on her; or, at least, that he would cause humiliation and discomfort by doing so. His position as her brother's guest made it impossible to violate the family conventions by asking her to see him alone.

But he filled her house with flowers, sent daily. Once or twice he again lured her and Roger to drive or take tea with him. One morning he met old Martha in the park, and found out what church Clelia and her brother attended.

He attended that service on the following Sunday. He was late, his chauffeur having trouble to find the tiny obscure chapel, and he never afterward forgot the exquisite change in Clelia's face when she lifted her head and saw him. The sun struck through the stained-glass window above her, so that she knelt in a shimmering haze of violet and amber and crimson light. Her eyes did not fall from his, but suddenly widened and grew splendidly unafraid.

He knew then. He had won.

The next day he walked to the great, gray house in the centre of the little park. He walked, because he did not want to flaunt his wealth before the others' poverty. The last week had wrought wonders in his recovery.

He thought of many things as he passed under the rustling trees: of his father's often expressed wish that Mark should bring home a wife, and of his mother's certain delight in this daughter. For it never had occurred to the close-knit Egertons that the son's marriage could separate them. Why should it? John Egerton and Mark, his son, were a unit in their undemonstrative, unvoiced devotion to each other.

The bell jangled mournfully through the house, in a wing of which the family now lived. It was many moments before the massive, black-walnut door was swung open, by Clelia herself.

That Egerton should come this way, with this natural simplicity, was the one possibility her dreaming fancy had not conceived.

"Oh!" she faltered, aghast as a child.

"Did you not know I must come?" he asked, his gray eyes carrying their undisguised message, his breathing quickened. "Will you send me away?"

She moved back, quite without words, and led him into the dim, faded drawing-room. There was a faint fragrance mingled with the atmosphere of the long unused place, a blending of mustiness and the ghost of past perfumes. Even in his preoccupation and eagerness, Egerton noticed it with a vague sense of oppression.

"Roger is not home," Clelia murmured, as they paused opposite each other.

"I did not come to see Roger," he answered. "I came to see you; and, if you permit, your father."

The direct openness of this wooing left little room for coquetry. But

Clelia herself was candid and of strong, few passions. She lifted her eyes to Egerton's.

"Yes," she uttered. "Yes."

Quite suddenly she was in his arms, fresh lips ardent in meeting.

"You will forgive me now for watching you in the mirror. You understand that I could not help it," Egerton said, after a while. No one could have judged him cold as he smiled down at his betrothed.

"I watched you first," she confessed happily.

"Because I was a curiosity: the man who got himself shot. Oh, I did not flatter myself on that score!"

"You might have." Her glowing face sobered. "You will not think me won too easily, Mark? I will not change ever. If I gave swiftly, I gave for always."

"—But trust me, gentlemen, I will prove more true than those who hold more distance"—the old words recurred to Egerton. Like the immortal girl-wife, this girl would keep faith before life, he felt the certain knowledge. There was as much reverence as passion in the kiss he bent to give.

"I also," he promised. "I may make mistakes. I will not fail."

"Word of an Egerton?" she challenged, seriousness lost in mischief, her dark eyes laughing behind their sweeping lashes.

"Word of an Egerton. And it has never been broken, my dear—my dear!"

It was quite half an hour later when Egerton ran up the broad stairs to interview General de Lauria. The time spent had included the grave business of measuring Clelia's small third finger for a ring.

"But I cannot wear it until my father allows," she told him.

"Suppose I were some penniless pretender, and he turned me from your door; would you elope with me?"

She refused to smile at such a supposition.

"I should die. There have been girls of my house who have died so, or in a convent."

"You would not come to me?"—incredulously.

"Disobey my father, Mark? Oh, no! You could not trust a wife who had done that. It would be wrong; there would be no blessing upon us."

Enchanted with the quaint fervor, he laughed outright.

"I knew you were a mediæval lady, the first time we met," he retorted.

He had refused to wait for Roger's return, or to allow Clelia the embarrassment of presenting her lover to her father. He sent up his card by old Martha, and went to the interview alone.

The room he entered was lofty and sombrely handsome, with the heavy frieze of raised plasterwork, the white-marble mantel and dark

panelling, in vogue fifty years ago. It was as fresh as loving service could make it, yet Egerton was conscious of the blended mustiness and perfume that he had breathed below, and of the same sense of stifled oppression.

The old man who rose to receive him was the genius of the place, yet strangely alien. Tall, spare, with piercing dark eyes thrown into relief by his invalid's pallor and the fine, thin lines of white eyebrows pencilled like a woman's, Juan de Lauria imposed the double respect yielded soldier and patrician. Inflexible, probably narrow, marked by stern endurance and the sternness that would exact like endurance from others, he was a force, and as such to be reckoned.

"I meet you with pleasure, Mr. Egerton," he greeted his guest. "We already know each other through my son. I am rejoiced that you have recovered from your wounds."

"They were too slight to be called so, to you, General," Egerton returned, his ease of a man of the active world meeting the other's stately formality. "If they had been more serious, I must have forgotten them to-day. But I have to thank you and your family for much kindness and hospitality."

The General bowed, and the two men considered each other in frank appraisal. The scrutiny satisfied both, and cleared the way for what was to come.

"I think you anticipate my errand, sir," Egerton said. "That is, if you have found leisure to read the credentials I sent through your son?"

"I have read them, Mr. Egerton."

"Thank you. Then, I would ask your consent to the marriage of Miss de Lauria and myself."

"Does that mean you already have her consent?"

"I did not have it last night, when I sent to you. I have now."

It was not in him to speak of his love for Clelia, or promise her happiness. The idea did not even occur to him. All that was implied in his proposal. But the reticence pleased the Spaniard's own dignity.

"I like you, and all I hear of you, Mr. Egerton," the General stated deliberately. "I appreciate your courtesy in remembering I am a foreigner and treating me as one, instead of taking my daughter in the fashion of this country. You have entirely satisfied me of your honor, position, and wealth."

"Thank you," Egerton acknowledged, with the quiet assurance of one who has never doubted himself.

"There is one more point. Since I have met you, I speak of it as a mere formality: one gentleman recognizes another, sir." He paused, his glance slowly travelling over the room as if in pursuit of something the younger man could not see. "I am an exile, Mr. Egerton, but I am the head of a house that is old and of high descent. You are in

trade; that is nothing! All Americans are practical. But of course I can give my daughter only to the descendant of a line of gentlemen."

Egerton's hand fell to the arm of his chair and gripped it. His gray eyes narrowing, he kept his expression impassive only by an effort physically exhausting. A line of gentlemen? His grandfather had boiled soap and peddled it through a New Jersey town. His father had taken the petty trade and expanded it to an enterprise of millions. A race of gentlemen? No, but a race of men!

"We prize other qualities, General de Lauria," he compelled himself to answer evenly. "Energy, honesty, clean hands and names, have been our standard of measurement, not the counting of dead ancestors."

The soldier's eye kindled.

"Sir, those are our personal duties. We owe also a duty to our forebears," he retorted. "It is final: my children shall never marry into another class than mine. I do not doubt you are of it, Mr. Egerton; give me the papers to show that, as you have to show less important things."

"I have no such papers here," Egerton slowly temporized. "Suppose, for the sake of argument, that they did not exist?"

"Then I should shake hands with you, sir, and regret that an alliance between us was impossible."

The magnificent word with its suggestion of high diplomatic contracts came oddly from the lips of the ruined soldier. But it was saved from absurdity by the loftiness that pushed Egerton's millions aside as of no moment. It was the spirit with which a Hindu might gather his rags about him and starve in silence, rather than share the food of a low-caste neighbor. Egerton did not smile.

"Miss de Lauria might think differently," he countered.

"Very probably. But she would obey me, sir."

It was true. Clelia's lover knew it, and that he faced a barrier there was no passing. Almost for the first time in his life, he sought refuge in an evasion.

"You will give me time to answer," he found himself saying, through his whirling confusion of thought. "I was unprepared——"

Mechanically he rose with the last word, breaking off the half-truth on his lips with a revulsion strong as nausea. He looked at the old man as a modern Faust at his tempter.

General de Lauria rose also, all gracious acquiescence. Somehow Egerton got out of the room; into the hall.

Out of the shadows Clelia's face blossomed, a glowing flower in the sombre place. Egerton caught her to him, rough in his unbearable passion and repentance. What had he done? What tragedy had he brought this girl, to whom he had promised happiness? The very softness of her body in his arms reproached him with her helplessness.

"Mark," she whispered, terrified by his silence, "what is it? Oh, what is wrong?"

The change in her irradiated face, the frightened clasp of her slight fingers, made a coward of him. He bent his head and answered with a kiss that drew back her color as fire leaps to fuel.

"You are my wife," he said, hoarse with feeling. "Come now—come with me. What have others to do with us? I would throw down my world for you—will you for me?"

He felt her shiver and stiffen in his embrace; her gaze clung to his in dawning fear.

"If I cannot marry you, Mark, I will never marry. My father——"

"If he refused me, would you send me away? For his prejudice, would you condemn us both to that?"

"You know—I should have to! Mark, what has happened?"

Her cry steadied him. Again, for the second time in a few moments, he used the weakling's shield and temporized.

"Nothing yet. Your father has sent me for further credentials. I will come back."

"He—has not——"

"Refused me? No, no! But remember I am not of your race; I hoped you might answer me differently."

All his will could not keep the bitterness from that reproach. The shuffling step of the old servant sounded near, preventing further speech. His moment with his betrothed was ended; and he was glad! But Clelia flung up both hands and drew down his head with a movement of passionate comprehension; her dark eyes wide to his and deep-warmed with that glow he had once before seen and compared to the rich glow of a hearth that is the heart of a home. She said nothing, yet gave him to see the answer he desired across the barrier she could never overthrow.

They did not kiss each other, but in that long meeting of glances was their true marriage; the marriage for which there is no divorce.

The gray October sunshine harshly dazzled Egerton when he stood outside. He walked on with a sense of blinded confusion. He was not aware that he had passed the limits of the park and was on the high-road to Englewood, until the roar of a motor fell into silence beside him, and he saw his own chauffeur leaning across the wheel to salute him.

"I've just taken Mr. Black home, sir," the man was saying. "As I came along, I thought you might wish to ride, sir."

"Yes. Get out," Egerton curtly directed.

"Sir?"

"I will take the machine. You can walk to the house."

Astonished, the chauffeur obeyed rather uneasily.

"It's the six-seventy, Mr. Egerton," he reminded his employer. "She's—excuse me—a heavy car for a driver who is n't feeling well."

In fact, Egerton had not driven at all since his illness. But he merely nodded thanks for the caution, and took the seat behind the steering-wheel. Nor did he turn toward the lodge, but swung the powerful car into a cross-road and shot away, leaving the chauffeur gazing blankly after him.

His own arrogance! It was with that reproach Egerton scourged himself; his arrogance, which had made it inconceivable to him that he should be barred from any family. He had been humble enough before Clelia, yes; he was too masculine not to yield that to her womanhood. But he had not dreamed possible a refusal from her penniless father. He had not troubled to consider her family's viewpoint; he had arrogated to himself all rights—as he had always done.

Well, why not? After all, he had done nothing to forfeit such rights. An angry red settled in his cheeks and temples, as a juster judgment sprang up to refute the first. No, it was not the rich man's arrogance that had led him into this sharp trap; it was his own consciousness of clean hands, clean name, and clean success that entitled him to claim his wife where he found her. Ancestry? No Arthurian knight ever held a stricter standard and example for his son than John Egerton had set for his. And Mark had satisfied him.

That would not help Clelia—Clelia, whom he had taught to love him as women of her kind love but once; Clelia, who because of him would wither into dry spinsterhood in the withered house. There could be no reversal of the decision against him. Years could not change this, nor death that changes so much. Tradition had clutched bony hands upon the young girl.

The car droned on steadily. Where, Egerton neither knew nor cared. He did not know that he made turns, or obeyed the signals of the road. Once he halted to avoid scattering a group of picnicking children, but a moment later he could not have told that he had seen them.

What could he do?

Once, several years before, the agent of a genealogical bureau had brought a portfolio of new-old parchment and papers to the senior Egerton. He had offered to construct a family tree for the rich man. The name was a fine old English one, the agent said; it would be easy to supply a link or two, and connect this American with the old line. Mark Egerton still remembered the armorial bearings and emblazoned colors on the documents which the man hurried back into the portfolio, after his father's scathing and contemptuous dismissal. He even remembered the agent's name, and that the bureau was in New York.

He had never lied in his life.

It was of Clelia he thought; for her he raged and rebelled. The tragedy to her defenseless youth, the long, bleak years for her, were the goods urging him. There was a stern stoicism in the Egertons; if they were

hard with others, they also were hard with themselves. He loved Clelia, but he would have accepted his own suffering and left her, had he alone been concerned. It was not romantic, but it was so. He would have lived without her, rather than live in the loathsome prison-house of a lie. He had wooed her deliberately and with success; had he the right to deny the bond and leave her to pay the penalty for his lack of caution?

He had been driving for hours. The sun had fallen so low that rays almost level stretched long shadows across road and countryside. He might have gone on until night if a shouted command had not halted him.

"No admittance without a ticket!" a raucous voice shouted. "Reserved seat, one dollar. Park your car front, five dollars. Finest meet in Jersey—see Laurence's dip o' death!"

Egerton passed a hand across his damp forehead. He awoke to realization that for some time he had formed one of a moving stream of vehicles; following with them simply because that required less exertion than to turn aside and choose a route of his own. Battle had been waged in him, devastating as physical pain. Suddenly he felt the reaction: a lassitude making him almost incapable of effort.

He found himself opposite a canvas fence, beyond which presumably lay the lauded exhibition. Behind him impatient voices called to him to go ahead or pull aside. Well, why not enter? Somewhere he must rest before he could drive farther; here he would at least attract no remark.

"Darin' loop o' death," the barker insisted, jumping upon the running-board to thrust forward a handful of pink tickets.

Egerton found a five-dollar bill and gave it to the man. He was almost too exhausted to drive his car forward and into the enclosure indicated.

It was an aviation meet. Not one of moment, merely an adjunct to a county fair. Opposite Egerton stretched a rough green field, on which rested a biplane surrounded by a group of men. The aviator was not in the machine, nor was there any indication of a flight in prospect. Uninterested and indifferent, Egerton lay rather than sat in the deep-cushioned seat of his car, his listless hand slipping from the steering-wheel.

After a moment, the driver of the next automobile turned to survey the latest arrival.

"Too late for the afternoon and too early for the evening," he observed genially. "Guess the barker worked you—what? All over until moon-rise, unless Laurence comes back."

Egerton compelled himself to courtesy; partly because any speech was a relief from thought.

"I happened in. It does n't matter. That is Laurence's machine?"

"Lord, no! Laurence flies a monoplane. He started on a cross-country flight with a bag of fool picture-postals—the crowd breaks its neck to send 'em by air! Maybe he's broken his neck doing it—there's been a nasty wind." He chuckled at his own wit. "He promised to do some trick work, but——"

A roar from the jesting, peanut-munching crowd interrupted him.

"There he comes!" "Over the flats!" "He'll make it!"

Against a sky rapidly tinting sunset primrose, Egerton saw the dark spot whose core held a man. He had seen much aviation, yet the old thrill touched him at the witness of man's achievement of the world-old ambition.

"He'll just about make it," the motorist beside him judged critically. "You know, he gets fifty dollars if he makes it before sundown. That's what he's working for! Have you had a long run? You look all in."

"Yes," Egerton gave absent reply. He fixed curious gray eyes on the man who was risking his life to earn fifty dollars. The sum was so pitifully small; he himself would so gladly have given a hundred times that for an answer to the problem wrenching him. What was honor? Was he to keep faith with himself, or with Clelia? Was it honorable to protect with a lie the woman whose love he had taken, or to speak the truth and let her suffer the result? The reiterated question beat at his weary brain.

The spot in the sky had become a line. Now it was changing from black to white, as the sun-rays struck the aeroplane's broad wings. The roar and throb of it came to the ear. The crowd, a surface of upturned faces, cheered perfunctorily. Many were already preparing to go home. A band burst into brassy "ragtime," as the exquisite machine swept curving down and drifted to earth like a tired dragon-fly.

Before it came to a stop on its tiny wheels, a man was running across the field toward the monoplane, bawling through a megaphone. The aviator paused in the act of leaving his seat, facing the other man with a gesture of evident protest. Interest caught, the crowd halted to watch the discussion.

"His manager means to chase him up again," translated Egerton's neighbor. "Don't want to go, either!"

The aviator did not want to go, obviously. Grasping the meaning of the scene, the spectators began to applaud; whistling and clapping after the manner of an audience demanding an encore, greedy for additional entertainment. The man with the megaphone became violent in his insistence.

Egerton sat up, a bracing rush of indignation tingling through him. The brutal callousness of the crowd to the danger of their human plaything stung him to sharp disgust. But before he could plan to take action, the aviator yielded in exasperated surrender and swung himself

again into his seat. There seemed to Egerton a familiarity in the poise and carriage of the man's slender, supple figure. He vaguely wondered at what other aero meet he had seen him.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Laurence will give his exhibition flight, as announced," the megaphone rasped. "Time of cross-country flight, one hour and sixteen minutes. Don't miss to-night: the first moonlight aeroplane ascension made in this State."

The crash of the band mingled with the boisterous applause of the people and the explosions of the motor.

"If that man is killed, it will be murder," Egerton stated his conviction.

The driver of the next car stopped rolling a cigarette to nod at him.

"You win," he agreed. "Of course, such a thing could never happen at an authorized aero meet. But what does the mob care? Why, out west I saw a mob badger an aviator into going up with a machine he knew was out of order! They bawled him out for a coward, and he could n't stand it. He fell a thousand feet—and the mob tore the clothing off what was left of him, for souvenirs."

The monoplane had fled across the field, and was up. Against the primrose yellow sky it circled, a white moth of Brobdingnag.

The next five minutes held the spectators shudderingly content. The airman swung in giddy loops; dropped in deadly plunges from which he retrieved himself in bare time; raced and played with death.

"A new man," commented Egerton's companion. "They're the most reckless every time. I'll bet he has n't had his first fall yet. Lord!"

The monoplane had shot down, righted itself at the last moment, and ran along the ground not far from them. All around rose sounds of starting automobiles and departing people too much occupied to applaud the toy that had stopped.

"Well, good-night," the man in the next car called, sending his machine backward out of the line.

Egerton did not answer. At that moment the aviator had stepped to the ground, removing his cap and goggles with a gesture of infinite fatigue. He was Roger de Lauria.

There was no need to ask why he had done this, not to the one who knew his family's poverty and pride. The whole story opened before Egerton like an unfolding scroll. He remembered the day when Roger's aid and skill had saved him from bleeding to death after Germain's attack, and Roger's brief explanation of that skill: he had seen something of aviation. He read the pretence of "business" which had enabled Clelia's brother to account both for absences and the money doubtless brought home.

Roger was still leaning against the aeroplane when a hand fell upon his shoulder.

"Come with me," Egerton bade brusquely.

Amazed, Roger turned, then slowly flushed like a boy detected in a fault.

"Thanks; I have a moonlight flight for this evening," he declined.

"I think not. Come to dinner with me, at least. I have driven over here, and am too played out to drive back. Can you run my car?"

"Yes, but——" He raised his head, with Clelia's proud directness of glance. "I can't break my engagement here, Egerton. I—can't afford it. My sketches never have paid; never will."

"My dear Roger, I hope you will enter into business life with me," Egerton quietly answered. "I am going to marry your sister."

So the decision was made.

CHAPTER IV.

It was characteristic of Mark Egerton that, his resolution once fixed, he neither wavered in it nor flinched from doing well the thing he hated. As a preliminary, he telephoned to the lodge and sent his Japanese servant to the De Lauria house with the message that Roger was spending the night in New York, with him. He also despatched a messenger to Clelia from the first office they found, bearing a box of roses and a few lines written on a card to the effect that her father would receive next morning the desired papers and their engagement be established.

Roger drove the car where he was directed, passive in the hands of his future brother-in-law.

"I won't say I never imagined this, because I did," he frankly told Egerton. "But—well, I kept my hands off. I think I should have liked it better if you had not so *much* more than we."

Egerton smiled grimly. His pride of wealth had been severely chastened. But it was not that which ached like a wound.

Over the dinner, in the dining-room of a hotel distinguished for elegance rather than ostentation—Egerton detested his music and menu blended—Roger confided a little more.

"I got into aviation because we had to have money," he related, hesitating in the unaccustomed choice of words that put aside reserve. "My father would no more think of selling our house, my mother's home, than he would of selling his sword. But he is a soldier, not a business man; he did mortgage the place long ago. Well, the interest was neglected, perhaps forgotten. Early this summer I was notified that we must pay a considerable sum by the first of the year or lose the property. I had n't been educated to earn money, Egerton. My father had his own views for me, and enforced them." He gave a short, impatient sigh that told a history of its own, and was silent for a moment. "One day I happened to be in Palisades Park when an aviator exhibiting there called

for some one to go up with him. I went, and we became friends. He was good-natured enough to teach me to fly the machine; the rest followed naturally enough. I had before learned something of gas engines and how to drive an automobile, because I was almost desperate enough to hire out as a chauffeur. But when it came to the point—I was n't built for a servant."

"How did you fall into the hands of that slave-driver who sent you up to-day when you were already tired out?" Egerton demanded, his eyes narrowing dangerously as indignation returned. "And what possessed you to risk your life ten times in as many minutes to please that Roman mob? It was courage gone mad!"

"But there is no courage about it," Roger answered simply. "I get frightfully airsick, and I have to nerve myself up to every flight I make. That is why I do those tricks when I am up: just because I'm so furious with myself for being afraid that I take chances to feel that I won't give in. I told you the other night that I was a coward."

Egerton put his cigar in his finger-bowl and stared at his companion.

"Are you?" he drily asked. "Then, if we are so complex, perhaps I am an honest man."

Very naturally, Roger failed to understand.

"I had no money to buy and run aeroplanes, so I hired myself to a man who had," he presently completed his explanation. "He was rather a brute; just a circus speculator in sensations, not recognized by clubs or aero authorities. Of course I don't have to ask you not to tell my father or Clelia."

"No. Our suite is engaged, upstairs. Can you amuse yourself for a few hours, if I excuse myself? I have a business engagement."

"Certainly. But it's night——"

Egerton shrugged, rising.

"You have spoken of money, Roger. It has a few privileges, yes. The man who has it needs no clocks."

Roger laughed. He was profoundly excited; it could not be otherwise, since all life had altered with this marriage. But he showed no outward sign except the unusual color burning in his dark cheek.

Egerton did not take his car, but walked to the office that was to carry out his plan. A woman feeling as deeply would have eaten nothing, but he had dined and felt the physical benefit in renewed strength.

He walked slowly, watching the glittering lights and theatre-seeking crowds with a heavy sense of finality; as if he were leaving on a journey, almost as a man might who faces a term in prison and knows he can never return in the same way to the same things. Indeed, Egerton knew that he never again would face his world quite as he did to-night, before he had broken his code. There was no romance in the situation, to him; he was not lying to possess Clelia, but to protect her. And he was not

of those who sin with reckless verve and laugh in the face of reproach. He had no pleasant modern doctrines of self-excuse and a personal right to happiness. In doing this thing, he suffered an intensity of feeling that changed him for the rest of his life, as heat changes crystal formations; changed even the quality of his love for Clelia.

It made no difference to him that manufactured ancestries and "family trees" were common and accepted things all over the world, so that the vanity was smilingly overlooked by general consent.

When Egerton returned to the hotel, near midnight, he briefly informed Roger that next morning he would have ready the papers to be delivered to General de Lauria.

"I should like the marriage to take place as soon as possible," he added. "Oblige me by forwarding that."

"I think that is for my sister to decide," Roger corrected a trifle stiffly, yet smiling, too.

"Naturally. But I imagine her decision would have very little effect without her father's," Egerton retorted, with a touch of bitterness.

"You've found that out?" Roger laughed. "Well, the same thing drove me to aviation; the decision was against my being anything but a soldier in the army Don Carlos is some day to form. Of course, I will do all I can, Egerton. I will talk to Clelia. By the way, I'm taking her this." He spread out an illustrated theatre circular, with a pleasant effort to dispel the other man's irritation. "Fine painting of Gérôme's, that! She and I were always wild about Julius Cæsar—she'd like to see this!"

"Would she?" said Egerton. "I will get a box for Wednesday's matinée, then, if you will play chaperon for us."

Taken unawares by the matter-of-fact proposition, Roger looked up quickly, his oversensitive pride alert.

"Oh, you know—I did not mean that!" he demurred.

Egerton wheeled on him, brows coming together above his flashing gray eyes.

"Why not?" he challenged. "Your sister is engaged to be my wife; why should she not accompany me with her brother to any proper place? I do not understand you."

Astounded, Roger also rose.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered. "Of course, there is no reason. It was only—you surprised me."

"You will come?"

"Certainly."

Egerton paused, amazed at himself. But he was paying dearly for Clelia; at least, he would not be disputed in the rights so hardly bought.

"It is for me to apologize," he acknowledged, scarcely less haughtily, however. "We are both over-tired, I fancy. I will say good-night."

The next day Roger carried the Egerton family's records to his father. And in return Mark Egerton received an invitation to dinner.

The guest never knew how great a concession that invitation was, or how much effort and grave thought the dinner cost his fiancée and old Martha.

It was a very ceremonious affair. General de Lauria came downstairs, in welcome to his daughter's "*futur*." Clelia was enchanting in her evening-gown; no man could have guessed that it was her first, made by herself from a many flounced, pink tulle skirt drawn from a venerable trunk long forgotten. The roses at her belt were of more value than the costume they supplemented. But rose-color and roses harmonized with each other; with cream-and-rose skin, the sheen of chestnut hair, and the contrast of velvet dark eyes.

It was not etiquette that Egerton and his fiancée should be left alone on this occasion. But when they were on their way to the dining-room, he paused in the shadowed hall to place a ring upon her finger and raise the little hand to his lips. Roger and his father had been detained by the mislaying of the old gentleman's cane.

"Let me take you home soon," Egerton urged, under his breath. "Do not play with me; be generous. Consent to our early marriage, Clelia."

The impatient pain and appeal of his tone deeply stirred the girl, even through her happy, excited confusion of thought. Indeed, Egerton found his position intolerably false. Mortification bit into him, his disgrace confronted him at every step under this roof. He had ignored General de Lauria in making his decision, as a narrow bigot unworthy of consideration; but he had not anticipated eating the bigot's bread and salt.

They were at the dining-room door, and the other two were approaching, but Clelia lifted her shining regard to her lover's.

"Yes," she whispered, too proud for evasion, giving with both hands.

His glance thanked her, enveloped her in a gratitude acute as pain.

The dinner partook of the nature of a state function. The conversation, led by General de Lauria, was of heavy, impersonal topics. Martha waited with all the dumb respectability of the long-departed butler and his assistants. Roger alone was conscious of the party's incongruities: of Egerton's success-stamped presence in the fated house of failure; of the simple meal served upon exquisite old porcelain; of Clelia herself, playing hostess in her home-made frock, with the beautiful diamond blazing on her hand.

When Clelia left the gentlemen together, Egerton pressed his wish for an early marriage. There was no reason for delay. He had cabled to his parents, but they were established at Sorrento for the winter and probably would not wish to come home for the wedding. If they did, a

week should give enough time. Two weeks was the least time possible, General de Lauria exclaimed. Egerton seizing that admission, the marriage finally was set within the next fortnight; subject to Clelia's consent.

Clelia did not fail him.

That night—Egerton's last at the lodge, since convention sent him back to his own house during the engagement—the Japanese met his master's return with a cablegram that had been received.

The message was laconic, as all from that sender.

Congratulations. Leave Black to run factory six weeks. Bring wife to see us. Mother's love.

JOHN EGERTON

Mark Egerton crushed the paper in his hand and stood looking straight before him. For the first time in his life, he did not want to see his father.

CHAPTER V.

THE twelve days before the wedding passed with a fleet, crowded strangeness for all concerned. Egerton burned with a feverish energy and unrest. Unperceived, his imperious will ruled both houses. He installed Roger in the advertising department of the great manufactory, where artistic and literary abilities became commercial assets. With the salary he fixed, comfort returned to the Laurias without a charity they would have refused.

The theatre party was but one of the pleasures and drives he arranged. And he showered Clelia with gifts, until she protested.

"You make every visit a Christmas Eve," she remonstrated playfully, when he wound around her neck a chain of cut amber clear as water, from which depended a fragile, glistening fan.

"When you are my wife, I will buy you everything you fancy," he answered, with a sombre force beyond her fathoming. "There is nothing you cannot have. If you want to please me, ask me for something—anything!"

Standing before him, she looked into his eyes.

"Why?" she asked. "If you had nothing, Mark, you would be the same to me."

"But you want the rest? You want what I can give you?" he demanded, almost fiercely. "All women do! You must."

"Oh, yes, I do," she avowed honestly, with a sigh of utter content. "I shall love the frocks and furs—and satin shoes! I adore shoes." She advanced a foot truly Andalusian, arched, diminutive, round of ankle. "I can gloat over mere pictures of them. Oh, and the theatre—and the motor-cars! Imagine going to the opera in satin shoes and a motor-car! You will have a ruinously extravagant wife, Mark. May I have a tiny, fluffy white dog to hold in my lap when we drive?"

He kissed her passionately.

Of course Mr. Egerton's command to his son was to be obeyed. Mark Egerton had arranged to take his wife on the six-weeks trip to Italy as a wedding journey. After all, he preferred meeting his father again in a strange city, instead of on the hearth he felt he had dishonored.

On the twelfth day, when sunlight poured through those stained-glass windows beneath which Clelia had knelt a few weeks before, Mark Egerton met his bride at the altar of the plain little church in the woods. She had chosen the place, and the bare simplicity of the ceremony. There were no bridesmaids, no guests except old Martha and the chauffeurs of the two cars. Roger de Lauria attended Egerton. Clelia entered with her father, suiting her young steps to his lameness. But she wore the maiden's white satin and veil, and Egerton had sent her masses of heavily-sweet orange-blossoms.

There was no interruption of the marriage. It had not occurred to Egerton that there might be. But discovery of his deception was not probable, except by his father. By him, indeed, it was inevitable, unless Mark were singularly favored by chances in the years to come.

But Egerton thought of nothing except Clelia, until at last he kissed his wife; his, no longer to be held from him. What followed was merely a confused succession of events: the drive to the old house, where Clelia changed her dress and where the usual untasted breakfast was served; the farewells that drew her first tears of the day, and finally their entrance into the limousine that was to take them to New York.

Alone in the car, it was as if peace and silence abruptly succeeded long-continued tumult. After a few moments, Clelia looked at her husband from under her long lashes, up-curved like a child's; awaiting his first speech with sudden timidity and a bride's quivering doubt of the unknown.

What Egerton said was the least romantic remark possible.

"The little white dog is in our suite on the steamer," he told her. "If you don't like him, I will find another."

Enfin seules or *mine own forever* never were more effective. With a glad little sound that was half a sob, Clelia nestled into his arms.

"How *dear* of you to remember!" she cried, against his shoulder. "I love you—I love you!"

CHAPTER VI.

MR. AND MRS. MARK EGERTON returned home at the end of two months. The wedding journey had been flawless from every standpoint. John Egerton and his wife had adopted their daughter-in-law with a prompt warmth that won swift response from Clelia.

"I always told Mark to marry his wife when he found her, and bring her home," Mr. Egerton stated, at their meeting, holding both the

girl's small hands enclosed in one of his. "I chose mine, and I'm no Turk that I should choose his, too. Take her from the chorus or the college, so she was the right one! But I see he and I have the same choice, after all."

"Yet he did n't take her from either," Clelia laughed, all flushed and enchantingly shy.

Mr. Egerton's keen gray eyes studied the sweet, candid face, then his glance went to his own wife.

"Neither did I," he said drily.

Mrs. Egerton and the girl met as two who found in each other a relationship until then denied; one had never known her mother, the other had coveted a daughter in all the loneliness of a woman whose men are much occupied away from her.

The first impression became fixed and deepened during the visit. Clelia was frankly delighted that her home would be with Mrs. Egerton and the burly, autocratic, iron-gray man who was so like Mark.

Mark Egerton had his emotions in those weeks in Sorrento. Too proud to ask Clelia not to speak of matters that might precipitate discovery of the manufactured ancestry, he suffered dumbly the uncertainty of when some innocent remark of hers should convict him.

But all had gone well. His father noticed no change in him for which marriage might not account; nor heeded the rare flush that reddened to his son's brow when they first clasped hands.

When he was again in their American home, now piled high with glittering snow without and ruddy with firelight within, alone with Clelia until spring should bring the return of his parents, Egerton felt his first respite and peace.

"You are glad to be back," Clelia laughed at him, the second evening. "Confess you have pined for your factories! You have been a prince in exile."

"Wandering with a fairy princess, rather," he corrected, looking at her with the grave, steady tenderness that was never to fail her. It was after dinner, and she stood straight and slim before him in her narrow pale-blue gown, beneath whose looped border of white fur showed one little foot in its "satin shoe," recalling promises kept. "But I am glad to be at work again. I was not trained to idleness."

She seated herself on the arm of his chair, slipping one round, bare arm about his neck. The little Pomeranian dog trotted over and settled beside them, resting its head against its master's foot.

"I am the happiest girl alive," she confided. "Tell me, when Mr. Black talked so long to you, this afternoon, and you looked so serious, did it mean that anything was wrong at the factory? Strikes, or something?"

"No, not that. Our business is run on the profit-sharing plan; we

have no strikes. But the cost of living is very high. The men want higher pay."

"Shall you give it to them?"

"I am only the junior partner," he reminded her. "My father decides. At first, I should have refused. The men have all they can justly expect, for our expenses are greater, too. But I have been thinking; after all, we are rich and they are not. If we all received but bare justice, few of us would not ask for mercy." He gave the short, impatient sigh that had become a new habit with him. "I will write to my father."

"Mark, how did they ever call you hard?"

"They call me what I have earned, Clelia, no doubt."

Her head drooped until her bright chestnut locks touched his brown hair. Her hand in his, they lapsed into silence, watching the fire on their hearth.

Peace continued through the winter days. Roger came and went; he radiated cheer and energy, and fully earned his salary in value to his department. Clelia drove frequently to the old mansion on the Palisades, now rejuvenated to comfort and kept so by a brisk young servant installed as aid to Martha. Once General de Lauria broke his retirement to pass a week-end in his daughter's home.

And still not even a word of ancestry troubled the calm. Egerton began to feel a dawning wonder if this peace might not endure, after all. He was so happy with Clelia that optimism became natural.

Clelia was not with him the February afternoon when he met the first reminder of the autumn days he resolutely strove to ignore. He was driving through lower New York, on his way home, when the limousine was halted by a traffic officer. Egerton idly glanced out the window, and saw the cause of the stoppage in a squad of men; that wretched flotsam of the city, the unemployed who find brief work after each snow-storm in cleaning New York's choked streets. They were shovelling desperately; half-clothed, half-fed men, haggard from the biting cold.

Egerton looked at them, first with that half-contemptuous pity the successful man feels toward the failures, then with startled attention as he recognized the nearest worker. He opened the car door.

"Germain!" he summoned.

The man turned, starting and trembling; almost letting fall the shovel from his stiff hands. His light-blue eyes fixed upon Egerton in utter, cringing terror.

"Is this the best you can do for yourself?" Egerton curtly asked.

Germain moistened his cracked lips.

"I've nearly starved," he said, his voice hoarse. "It's honest! But it does n't always snow."

Six months before, Egerton, would have tossed the other a bank-note and have driven on. Now he swung wider the door.

"Get in," he bade.

Stupefied, Germain stared. The traffic officer had raised his hand, and the limousine began to roll forward, one of a slow-moving procession.

"Get in," Egerton repeated imperatively.

Germain obeyed, and sank upon the cushioned seat opposite his former employer, gazing at him in a sort of hypnosis. His poor clothing was saturated with snow-water, and he shivered constantly.

Egerton did not speak for some time. When he did so, the car was nearing the ferry to New Jersey.

"You say this work is honest; have you done any that was not?"

"No, sir. Not—not since——"

Egerton understood, and smiled grimly.

"We will ignore that, unless you force me to recall it. No one knows that you shot me, except my wife and her brother. Germain, because your father was my friend, I will give you another chance before I let you starve. I will have you fed and decently clothed to-night, and to-morrow you can have work in our shipping department. If you make good, very well. If not, I am done with you. Do you want to try?"

Germain's weak chin quivered; nothing in his knowledge of the other man had prepared him for this. Brokenly fervent, he stammered gratitude.

"I will! I—I was crazy that time! I've often seen you passing, Mr. Egerton, but never hoped you would help me—you said that—that you'd not have a liar around you."

Egerton's gloved hand closed sharply. The memory of his arrogant self-sureness rose and struck him in the face. Who was he, to rate himself above this man? He turned aside to the window, and endured his bitter lesson in humility.

In humility, but not with humility. Being very human, there surged over him such a disgust and loathing for Germain that he could scarcely suffer his neighborhood. And suddenly it seemed to him that the odor of Germain's wet garments combined with the fragrance of lilies contained in a vase fixed to the limousine's wall, producing the same oppressive, suffocating atmosphere of mustiness and faint perfume as he breathed and hated in the old De Lauria house.

It was not in Egerton to break a promise either to the ear or to the hope. But when he saw Roger on the sidewalk of the village, half an hour later, he abruptly checked the car and called his brother-in-law.

After the first astonishment, Roger willingly and good-naturedly undertook the charge. Germain, secretly uneasy in Egerton's presence, accepted the new guardian with equal willingness. So Egerton drove home alone.

But the winter peace was broken, not to be reëstablished. When he entered the house Clelia ran to meet him.

"There is a cablegram for you," she announced. "I hope nothing is wrong, Mark."

He gave his coat and hat to the man, and drew Clelia's hand through his arm.

"Open it next time," he advised, smiling into the wide dark eyes. "But my father is of an impatient temperament; he never writes when a cable will do."

The message was laconic as usual. It answered a long and carefully considered letter from Egerton in regard to the factory operatives' plea for higher wages.

No advance. Refuse everything. Am returning next month.

Egerton handed the message to his wife, with a deepening of the shadow Germain had left on his expression. Next month! He had not anticipated this result.

"What will you do?" Clelia soberly asked, after reading. "The poor men!"

"As he directs, certainly. I have no choice."

She studied him, her delicate, vivid face intent.

"You are thinking of something, Mark?"

"Something, clairvoyant lady," he admitted. "If I cannot raise the men's wages to meet high prices, I might reverse the process."

"You mean——"

"Lower the prices to reach the incomes. The men buy in small quantities, so pay the highest retail cost. But I could buy wholesale from the producers, at a great saving. In short, I could run the village grocery and butcher-shop so that they would be self-supporting, yet supply the people at rates within their means."

"Splendid!" she cried, clapping her hands delightedly. "You will? You will?"

He paused.

"Yes," he said definitely. And after a moment: "They will be home next month."

Naturally, she knew he spoke of his parents.

"Two months before we expected," she nodded. "You are glad, dear?"

"Yes," said Egerton. He shivered slightly, as if the outdoor chill were still with him, and suddenly crushed Clelia to his side.

Fate had ended her truce with him. As if to mark it, the cold weather broke that evening in one of those wild, unheralded rain-storms that sweep the Atlantic coast and beat to sodden ugliness the gleaming white snow-stretches.

Curiously enough, his kindness to Germain brought about Egerton's first disaster. For Roger de Lauria's charge, warmed, fed, and clothed, talked weakly and fulsomely of his benefactor.

"He's a gentleman," he came to a climax, at last. "I don't care if he does n't know who his grandfather was—he's a gentleman."

Roger had been listening tolerantly, while completing a sketch for a soap-powder advertisement. But at this he raised his head.

"What?" he exclaimed sharply.

"He is a gentleman."

"No doubt. What do you mean by such an outrageous statement as that he does n't know his parentage?"

"Not his parents," Germain corrected, his vanity offended. "Everybody knows that John Egerton grew up in the next town and married the minister's daughter. But his father swung into town off a freight train, as old folks can tell you, and settled down to making soft and hard soap for the farmers' wives. No one cared enough to ask where he came from, I guess; anyhow, no one knows anything more about him than his name. He married a girl from here, too, who had a bit of a farm. But he was always cooking kinds of soap, they say; and people thought it was good stuff. I guess it was. John Egerton has made millions, building up the business his father started in 1850, in a brick outhouse. But Mark Egerton is a gentleman."

Roger laid down his pencils and walked to the window. The story carried the impress of truth; it was difficult to conceive a mistake so circumstantially narrated. No one could have looked at Germain and supposed him lying. Yet—the alternative was that Mark Egerton had lied. Roger felt the giddiness of a man whose world shakes under him. Egerton, the irreproachable, whose Lyncurian severity distinguished little difference between theft and lying, huddling together "small vices" scornfully—Egerton, to do that! Why? Roger mocked at the idea. Why?

The answer leaped up, undesired: to obtain Clelia.

After some moments he turned to Germain.

"You had better go to bed," he said brusquely. "I am going home."

It was nearly ten o'clock, and the drenching storm was at its height. Where the snow lay too heavily to have yet been dissolved, the mass yielded underfoot, with the oozing resiliency of a wet sponge. But Roger de Lauria forced his way through wind and downpour, facing a tempest not so easily breasted. He was not going home. Instead, he went to Egerton's house.

Mr. and Mrs. Egerton had driven into New York, to the opera, the butler told him; relieving him of his dripping garments as a matter of course. Mr. de Lauria was a member of the family, whose presence was natural at all times. Declining refreshment, Roger went into the library.

The rich comfort of the room enveloped and quieted the guest; the subdued glow of light cast through wine-hued shades was warm as the glow from the deep hearth. Clelia's Pomeranian sat up in the depths of a huge leather chair and yawned with a display of pink tongue. Struck keenly with all this life had brought to his sister, Roger sat down, his high-bred, sensitive face very grave. Suddenly he was glad he had not found Egerton home.

There was an alternative. Mark or his father might have traced back the history of the grandfather, and so have established in all honesty the family records that had contented General de Lauria. The village and factory gossips might not have learned that fact. On an impulse, he rose and went to a drawer where he had seen Egerton thrust that document which had cost so much, on receiving the record from the General.

It was still there. Roger carried it to the table, under the lamp.

There was nothing to show any error or deception. The line ran smoothly back, without a break. The grandfather was set down as the son of a New England divine of note. From there, the line went to England; the younger branch of a titled house long extinct. There was nothing wrong; yet the critic was not convinced, warned by some such delicate sense as that by which gem-experts are said to distinguish the false stones from the true merely in touching them.

Roger de Lauria leaned his chin in his hand, looking down at the document. He considered deliberately what he and his owed Egerton: Clelia's radiant happiness, his father's old age made comfortable and free from care, he himself rescued from his desperate, hopeless struggle against the family's ruin. He remembered the evening Egerton had found him on the aviation field. And he knew that he cared not at all whether Mark Egerton were descended from a king or a thief. No, nor whether he had once stooped to fight prejudice with deceit!

What, supposing the incredible true and that Egerton had lied—what was the best aid his brother by marriage could give him?

Eleven o'clock struck; and in due time, the half-hour. Just after midnight, the outer doors opened and reclosed, a girl's clear laugh sounded in the hall. Roger and the little dog started up together as Clelia and Egerton entered.

"Roger? How nice!" she exclaimed welcome. "We will have supper *à trois*. Oh, what a night!"

"It is bad," her brother agreed, still distant in thought; more intent upon her than upon her speech.

She laughed at him. She was altogether dazzling in her white and gold costume, her bright hair banded with a gold fillet from which a white plume drooped to her shoulder. The extravagant fashion of the day suited her; it was hard to believe she had ever gone clad in cotton frocks and that her little boots had been shabby.

"Bad? Glorious—where we were! Oh, I wanted to bury my face on Mark's nice, convenient shoulder and *weep* with such music!"

She sank down on the bench before the piano, her fingers finding the melody her fancy repeated.

"'Oh, thou divine, pure evening star,'" she sang, in her fresh, limpid voice that rippled as naturally as a brook, and was as innocent of training.

Egerton had crossed to the fireside. Now, as he turned his smiling glance from his wife to his brother-in-law, his eye was caught by the document upon the table, and he saw the hateful colors of crest and lozenge glinting under the lamplight.

Once before Roger had seen that flashing change in Egerton's face. In spite of himself, he shrank from the power of concentrated anger with which the other turned upon him.

"What are you doing with that?" Egerton demanded.

Roger made the one answer which admitted no retort.

"I am sorry if you did not want me to see it. It was in an open drawer."

Egerton paused. He was accustomed to reading men, and he bent all his trained acuteness of scrutiny upon this one. Clelia's music flowed around them, smothering passion in its smooth currents. In the interval, the butler entered, marshalling the supper array.

Roger de Lauria was Latin enough to be inscrutable when he chose. Egerton had convicted himself, but the other made no sign. Instead, he turned to Clelia and lightly arrested her fingers as they fled across the keys.

"Little sister, ask Mark to let me share his bread and salt," he said. "I have offended him."

The request was playfully spoken, but Egerton moved and changed color. He recognized that if Roger suspected him, his anger had proved him guilty. If it were so, and Roger still asked to be his guest—

"If you care to stay, you are welcome," he slowly gave the invitation.

"Thank you. Then, I will stay," Roger accepted.

Amused and surprised, Clelia had risen, and now went over to take her place at the supper-table. The two men exchanged an indefinable regard, as they followed her. A stranger would have reversed their positions, for Egerton's glance was coldly steadfast, even stern, while Roger's dark eyes fell and took shelter behind their lashes like a woman's.

CHAPTER VII.

MARK EGERTON looked long at the message brought to his breakfast-table.

"You must go alone," Clelia bravely repeated, although her lip

quivered childishly with disappointment. "Your father and mother must not come home for the first time since our marriage, to find an empty house."

"It could not be more awkward. I have never left you alone, Clelia."

"I know, dear. But—but we must. I can ask Roger to stay with me while you are in Chicago."

Roger? He bent his head. Did Roger know, or did he not? That was the question which had beat like a pulse in Egerton's tired brain. If the first, what was he doing—what would he do? Would he tell his sister? Certainly he had not yet done so. To Egerton's puritanical judgment, it was not possible that Roger could ignore the thing.

He had forgotten his watcher. Suddenly Clelia was beside him, leaning against his shoulder.

"What is it, Mark? You would rather I did not have Roger? Dear, something is wrong! You have changed."

"I? No!" he exclaimed, almost fiercely, crushing her fragrant softness to him. "Will you, Clelia? Can you change? Once you put me off for duty—your family——"

She stopped him, deep southern eyes open to his.

"You are my duty—my family—all. I am yours, your woman. Mark?"

He hid his eyes against her breast, as some time their children might do, but he did not confess.

So when a blast of March wind, a masterful voice raised in commands, and the slam of baggage announced the John Egertons' arrival, Wednesday morning, Clelia came alone down the stairs to give welcome.

Mr. Egerton gathered his son's wife into his arms and kissed her with assured kinship.

"Prettier than ever," he approved. "What's this, Mark in Chicago and you here? Tired of each other, eh?"

"I was to go," she refuted the insinuation, turning to Mrs. Egerton. "But you and Mamma were coming——"

"And you stayed to welcome the old folks?" His keen, naturally stern gray eyes softened as he looked at the girl-woman. "Think of that, Grace: we've got a daughter who stays home for us while our son goes gadding over the country! What is all this nonsense I hear about Mark? Turning philanthropist, is he? Are you responsible for that? It will make trouble."

"Oh, no," she disclaimed warmly. "It is Mark who is so kind to the men that I am quite sure they never would make trouble or strike."

"Strike!" echoed the master, in a tone that shook the chandelier. His face hardened like chilling metal. "Let them try it. I am going to see Black."

"But indeed there is no trouble," she pleaded in dismay. "And it is time for luncheon."

"And you stayed home to give it to us, and I was leaving you," Mr. Egerton added, relaxing. "Well, later, then."

But the scene had suggested an idea to Clelia. Could anxiety as to his father's attitude toward the new methods have caused Mark's growing depression? She resolved that she would relate all to Mrs. Egerton, and secure an ally in her for Mark and his men.

The opportunity came after luncheon, when the two ladies retired to the agreeable task of having trunks and gifts unpacked.

Mr. Egerton came upon the exhausted ladies at five o'clock, when he swung into his wife's room. Clelia, clad in an amazing gold-colored negligée brought from Vienna and crowned by a tasselled cap of Venetian seed-pearl work, her lap filled with a varied collection of souvenirs, sat on a cushion with her head against Mrs. Egerton's knee.

"Don't scatter," Mr. Egerton advised. "I ought to be one of this group."

"John," said his wife, pink-cheeked with the pleasure of this new companionship, "I never had any one to pet before. You know I always wanted a girl."

"We've got her," he returned, lowering his large frame into a chair. He looked across to the girl's questioning dark eyes. "Well, I've seen Black, gone over the factories and through the village. Mark is all right. The business is in good shape, and his shops do support themselves. But"—his face abruptly lost its geniality, hardening to contempt—"Germain is back, Grace. I saw him skulking about, peering out at me. Mark chose to give him another chance, it seems."

"You did not dismiss him, John?" Mrs. Egerton anxiously deprecated. "He was very young."

"My son's word is my word," her husband answered, with a rugged dignity. "Since Mark took him, he stays. But it's the first time I've had a proved liar in the place. Clelia, your brother and I had a long talk. I like him. He'll be head of his department in six months. We drove up to call on your father, and they will both be here to dinner to-morrow night. Mark will be home by then—I heard from him."

So all was well, and Mark was coming home. All the evening, while she played or chatted, Clelia held that undercurrent of thought. It was like the lilt of some gay little refrain, setting all her world to music.

Before she went to bed, she sat for a long time, holding the three-sided, leather-framed mirror of famous memory. She fancied, dreaming awake, that those days of betrothal and first love were like the rising of a beautiful, rapid brook that rushed with vehement eagerness, sun-shot and full of sound. But now the brook had flowed into the lake, clear and still, and deep beyond all measuring.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONE dinner-guest came early. It was scarcely twilight and not quite the hour when Mark Egerton was expected to arrive, when General de Lauria was established in the library.

He was engaged in stately conversation with his host. The two men possessed a curious interest for each other. Not widely apart in years, they were yet of different periods, of different worlds; opposed in training, in prejudices, even in standards. It was strange to both to find even conversation in common.

A steel and inlaid helmet brought home by the travellers at last furnished a theme upon which to meet.

"It is Milan work, of the sixteenth century," the General fixed authoritatively, handling the piece with zest. "Bayard might have worn it, or the *Gran Capitán*. It has seen service; here it is dented, and here a spear ran through. Some gentleman had his death-wound in this. His foe had the motto of your house, Mr. Egerton: '*Gare mon bras!*' He struck heavily."

"There are no mottoes for my house. But we're hard hitters, too," said Mr. Egerton drily.

"Pardon me, sir; my memory cannot be so weak. That is the legend given with your coat-of-arms in the papers your son sent me at the time of his marriage. Clelia, you remember?"

"Yes, Father," Clelia replied, from her seat near a window overlooking the entrance. "I am quite sure it was as you say."

John Egerton looked from one to the other, amazed and puzzled.

"There is some mistake," he asserted. "Mark could have sent no such thing, for it does not exist."

"I saw it, Mr. Egerton," the other insisted, no less assured. "It is on your family records—your family tree."

"There are no such things."

"If there had not been, sir, your son could not have married my daughter," retorted the General, striking his palm on the arm of his chair. "He knew that when he sent me the documents."

There was a pause.

"The documents?" Mr. Egerton repeated, past anger. "The documents?"

Clelia had risen. With the one thought of defending Mark, she hurried to the drawer where the record had been flung the night of Roger's examination. Coming between the men, she triumphantly dropped the proof upon the table and snapped on the lamps.

Rustling and crackling, the parchment unrolled. John Egerton bent over it, and read.

All day Clelia had watched for her husband, but she did not hear

his arrival now. Unwarned, intent on finding his wife, Mark Egerton threw off his wraps with an eager impatience that took note of nothing. A maid opened the library door, and he walked into the presence of the court of honor.

Clelia started forward with a cry of welcome and relief, but her father-in-law threw out his arm and put her back.

"Not now," he forbade.

Mark halted. All his life he remembered that impression of the warmly-lighted room, the group facing him, the document he had bought and hated again outspread upon the table. He was not a coward; he came forward, but with the color suddenly wiped from his face.

"Mark, this man and your wife say you are responsible for this forged cheat," Mr. Egerton opened, his voice hoarse from the restraint forced upon it, "that you used this trick to get her. Is it true?"

He expected a denial; in the face of all proof, that expectation was plain in his eyes. And the son knew his denial would be believed against the evidence of the world. But there never had been anything but truth between these two; there never would be.

"Yes," Egerton answered, very quietly.

There was a silence of utter incredulity. John Egerton leaned forward, his gray eyes fixed on the gray eyes so like them, his face suddenly quite gray and lined.

"You put our name, the name I made and kept clean, to that lie? It was n't good enough? You, Mark Egerton, pieced together these tawdry rags and hung them on us—to get a woman?"

Mark's eyes did not fall, although the biting accusation, stripped of every excuse, drove the color to his cheeks in two red spots. He said nothing. It was not possible that he should bare here the netted mesh of feeling which had entangled him; make indecent exposure of the compassion, the desire to protect, the tenderness so far removed from reckless passion.

"It is true, sir? You obtained my daughter under false pretences?" General de Lauria's thin voice broke the pause; the words stammered with violent agitation. "You deceived me—deceived *her* into a marriage we should have refused."

With a cry Clelia ran to her husband, clasping both small hands over his arm and lifting her face to him.

"No!" she denied passionately. "Mark, I thank you for taking me. I thank you for marrying me before I knew, so that I have the right to be yours. Mark, dear Mark, I will give all I can, all I owe—where you go, I will go; as you live, I will live, and honor you all my life. Oh, you others!" She faced the judges, splendid in defiance. "How can you know him, yet not know he did that—not to 'get the woman,' but

because the woman loved him? Mark"—she turned impetuously to him and hid her burning face against the arm she clasped—"never was a daughter of my house so honored in her marriage-day as I."

The room was left silent.

"Gentlemen," Mark said, when he could command his voice, "you will excuse me while I take my wife to her room."

"Were we in my country, sir, I should take her to my house," flung General de Lauria, his lean, trembling fingers gripping his cane.

"I think not," was the coldly steady reply. "To my father, I have no answer. To you, I will say that I took this way to defend your daughter only when I found your idle prejudice of birth making a prison-wall around her. Idle, sir"—as the other would have spoken. "For, whether I was or was not fit to be your daughter's husband, that parchment record could not have changed me. And you had already declared me fit as a man."

"You lied," reiterated Mr. Egerton, unstirred.

"Yes," his son agreed, as laconically. He looked down at Clelia's bent head, and gently drew her a step toward the door.

Before they reached it, his mother rose from a seat half-hidden by the window curtains and took Clelia into her own arms.

"Give me my girl, Mark," she bade. "And, John, do you overcome your sinful pride!"

Amazed, John Egerton stared at her. The matron in evening-gown and jewels had reverted to her church-bred youth, and spoke as the country clergyman's daughter he had married.

"Grace!" he rebuked.

She confronted him fearlessly, in the rebellion of the gentle.

"John, I've done as you bade for thirty-six years. I want you to listen now. For I know! Mark, a year ago would you have done the good you did this winter? When before did you make the troubles of the men your own? When did you lend your time to manage shops so your men might be better fed, or plan to buy coal for the village with that for the factories so that the houses might be better warmed? Before you had yourself done wrong, would you have showed pity to the boy Germain? You have been hard men; so sure of your own righteousness that you had no mercy. Do you remember ten years ago, John, when you closed the factory in midwinter? I pleaded with you, but you would not listen. You were right and the men were wrong; you said they suffered what they earned. Mark would not do that now. John, John, Mark will be a better man than you have ever been, because he has been taught. God does not put us on earth to make no mistakes, but to learn from them."

It is not the woman recognized as forceful who can be the most impressive. Both men were startled and profoundly stirred by the rising

of this household judge, so loving and so loved. To Mark Egerton, it seemed that he saw into himself as one sees a dark landscape by a lightning-flash. He had learned humiliation; now he bent his head and learned humility.

As if abashed at the new prominence into which she had been swept, Mrs. Egerton had retreated to a couch and seated herself, drawing the awed Clelia down beside her. John Egerton looked attentively at her, then at his son. He was not a man of much imagination, but now that he used his eyes he saw on Mark's face the writing of this experience: the line between the brows, the weariness of eyes and mouth, and the gravity that had become constant. He was not softened, but he comprehended Mark better.

"First, burn that," he required curtly, motioning toward the table.

Without a word Mark took the false record and dropped it into the open fire. At least, the Egertons were united in hatred of that emblazoned cheat.

In the pause, the closing of the heavy outer door was heard by all. The last dinner-guest had arrived. Almost at once the library door opened and Roger de Lauria was in the room.

His first regard as he came across the floor was caught by the blazing hearth and blackening parchment.

"I am late!" he exclaimed, holding out his hand to Mark Egerton. His vivid glance flashed over the group. "I hope, not too late."

Courtesy to his hostess, combined with an outraged wrath whose violence suffocated speech, had held General de Lauria dumb. But now he pulled himself erect, rigid with passion.

"Roger, this man—this man——"

Roger raised his hand, checking the outburst. His dark face was glowing.

"Wait, sir," he besought. "Only wait! I know. Mark, don't bend your frown on me; I chanced to learn, quite by accident, last month. And—well, I wanted to help you. Let me finish, please. I saw your genealogical expert. He told me that the record was made in good faith. He said that he was not a faker, but an investigator; if he had not believed the record true, he would not have offered it to you, Mr. Egerton, years ago. But you would have nothing of it."

"Then, nor now," said John Egerton grimly.

"You cannot help what is, sir," Roger retorted. "The man got out his papers and showed me. The link missing, Mr. Egerton, was the proved identification of your father with a younger son of the Reverend Ethan Mark Egerton, who ran away from home early in life. You see how probable—the name is not a common one. Well, I set out on the back trail. I enlisted Germain to help me, Mark. It is really he who has done this; I never saw a man work so hard. And we succeeded. We

found an old tradition that the first Egerton had spoken of living in Trenton. It was true. We traced him from there, where he worked in a chemist's shop, step by step back to New England and the school from which he had been expelled for causing an explosion by taking chemicals to his room. That was the clue, always; his chemistry, of which his perfected soap was one development. The record you bought last autumn was your own."

General de Lauria uttered an ejaculation of boundless relief, sinking back into his chair exhausted by emotion. Clelia was already across the room and in her brother's arms, Mrs. Egerton following her.

Only Mark and John Egerton were left looking into each other's eyes with one ironic question in common: what had this to do with the matter?

But it was all in all to the others. And before gratitude and relief could become embarrassing, the situation was drawn into the safe waters of the prosaic: Williams drew aside the curtains and announced dinner.

The three words came like a breath of outer air across the heated atmosphere of a theatre. The soldier rose first to the duty of courtesy.

"I am happy in this"—General de Lauria recovered stately composure. "Very happy! But my instinct in such matters is seldom at fault. Let us forget past unpleasantness. Mrs. Egerton, allow me the honor——"

She laid her plump hand on her guest's arm, and they led the way.

"Mark, it is all over," Clelia breathed, lifting her earnest face to him.

"Dear, you will never be troubled now! All is right."

He kissed her.

"Go with Roger," he urged gently. "I must change these travelling-clothes."

She obeyed, with a happy backward glance that was a caress.

"Is all right, Mark?" drily asked Mr. Egerton, behind him.

Mark turned, almost savagely.

"No," he flared. "Do you think I can be made honest by accident, sir? You have said it: I lied. Well, I am not a hypocrite; I shall live happily, no doubt. But it will never be the same."

John Egerton nodded slowly. Then, and then only, he stretched forth his hand to his son.



TALKING PICTURES A REALITY

By Robert Grau.

WE know what has been the effect of the moving picture on public entertaining. Not only has it created millions of amusement patrons to whom the inside of a play-house had been an unknown spectacle, but the truly amazing vogue of the camera man has completely changed the theatrical map. It has converted one-third of the regular play-houses into temples of the silent drama, has driven mediocre theatrical companies off the road, has enriched a new type of showman, and finally has driven into the film studio not only the world's most celebrated players—who have made the excursion from the speaking stage to that of the photo-play industry with grace and dignity—but at last the men who for years have catered to the public's entertainment along older lines—such as the Frohmans, John Cort, Al H. Woods, the Shuberts, and even Belasco—have capitulated to the theatre of science, and are now investing on an enormous scale in the newer art and its gold-laden productivity.

We know also that the sister invention of the cinematograph—the ever-potent phonograph—has enriched the grand-opera singers of great renown quite as much as have their efforts on the stages of our opera-houses. It is now conceded that most of the problems of our opera-houses have been solved as a result of the thousands of persons who had never heard an opera sung, but who, having heard the world's greatest singers in their favorite arias through the science of the phonograph, now flock to the box-office of the modern opera-house. The once precarious field of grand opera is now noted for its great stability and for the difficulty of securing seats even at six dollars each.

And now Thomas Alva Edison, who gave us both these epoch-making inventions, bent as he is to provide entertainment for those who cannot pay the prohibitive prices for seats in our opera-houses and theatres, has decided to utilize the two great inventions so that the working-man may lay down his dime in the motion-picture theatre of to-morrow and hear and see the grand operas, spectacles, and plays precisely as presented in our high-priced places of amusement.

The writer is now in a position to declare that Mr. Edison's aim has been achieved. The "talking pictures" are here, and they are worthy

of a far more dignified name. Assuming that progress shall be rampant from now on, as it has been in every phase of endeavor with which the Wizard has been associated, it is not too much to predict that where heretofore only five per cent. of the nation's population could afford to hear and see the best plays and operas at the prevailing prices, another year may record the astounding fact that ninety-five per cent. of the people of the civilized world may hear and see the very best in music and the drama. And mark you, the people in "Podunk," as the Wizard expressed it, would enjoy this blessing on the same day that New York's public does, and at the same low price.

And now the reader is asking to be informed as to the *modus operandi* of the latest Edison achievement. It may be stated at the outset that it required something more than a mere synchronization of the phonograph and the cinematograph to reach the very revolutionary status that is now to be revealed to mankind. As the spectator sits in his orchestra chair, for which he has paid ten cents, he is convinced that sound and action emanate from the screen itself. The amazing part of it is that the spectator's viewpoint is correct. However, let us see just what the plotting and planning of the last three years in the Orange laboratory has meant for us of this great era and the unborn generations. (Oh, how I do envy those endowed future generations!) At the recent demonstration of what is to be known as the Kinetophone, in one of the assembly-rooms of the Orange institution, Mr. Edison himself sat in the front row, as full of anticipation and as eager seemingly to criticise as to applaud, as is his wont. When a synchronized record showed the lecturer explaining the scope and purpose of the Kinetophone—even the erstwhile lecturer is replaced by science henceforth—the words of compliment and credit to the great inventor so embarrassed him that he then and there ordered that this particular film be discontinued.

When at this private exhibition's close the inventor was asked by a well known newspaper man if he regarded the present exhibit as perfect, Mr. Edison replied unhesitatingly as follows:

"Nothing is perfect. Man himself is not perfect. He needs the doctor; hence why should any of my inventions represent more than a human being?

"But," continued the Wizard, "while this development here to-day represents the labor of the last three years, it is, in fact, the culminating result of thirty-seven years of thought, experiment, and persistent research."

The machine records at the exact instant of occurrence on the film any sound made at the moment such action takes place—the creaking of a gate, a whistle, the noise of hoof-beats, even the click of cocking a revolver, come apparently from the screen, and in precise unison with

the motion. Every word uttered by the actors is recorded resonantly, truthfully, and delivered in time with the action.

Already the Kinetophone is the attraction in a score of the leading play-houses of this country. In another sixty days the people in the smallest cities will see and hear the most compelling plays and operas without journeying to some large city, and, like the progress of the moving picture, the output will become more important, more elaborate, and more marvellous, as the months go by. Mr. Edison thinks that the Kinetophone will reach its greatest goal far quicker than either the cinematograph or the phonograph. In fact, he believes three years will suffice to achieve every aim. Nothing is too big for reproduction on the Kinetophone; and ultimately its very greatest service to mankind will be revealed in its ability to transfer to the screen even the grand-opera productions of the vast subsidized European opera-houses, which could never be brought hither, because of the tremendous financial requirements.

It will also be possible to transfer to the screen several revered spectacles and plays, to see which it has always required a pilgrimage to some remote section. Thus the ennobling Oberammergau production of the Passion Play can be given to the entire world, and undoubtedly will be; and Mr. Edison's solution of the greatest of problems in the art of entertaining makes it possible at last for Americans who cannot afford to go to Paris to witness the consummate artistry of the *Comédie Française*; for be it known that the *sociétaires* of the House of Molière have to vow that they will never permit themselves, individually or collectively, to be seen outside of the four walls of the endowed play-house.

Much of the intricate mechanical phase of the new invention is a secret, but it may be stated here that the phonograph which is placed behind the screen is wired to the picture machine, which may be one hundred or more yards away. The speed of the talking or singing acts as a brake on the film, so that neither can get ahead of the other.

Even in this primitive stage of the development, an entire entertainment can be given without complications for the operator. There are special records that run precisely as long as the film lasts, and other records can be made to come into place successively, and the performance carried on through a whole opera or play.

After years of patient research, Mr. Edison has developed a recorder of sufficient delicacy to catch the minutest sound-waves at a distance of forty or fifty feet, in order that the recording apparatus would be outside of the field of the lens. It is this device that presents mechanical contrivances too intricate to describe, but its effectiveness lies in the ease with which the operator may attach it to the picture machine, and it is left to the actors and the singers to perform in the regular way to make an infallible dual record.

The talking machine is so constructed that it sets the pace for the picture machine, so that the reel cannot overrun the record on the phonograph. The operator, who is compelled by the new law to operate in a booth that is fire-proof, and consequently sound-proof, is provided with a transmitter from the phonograph, and a speed indicator by which he can detect any trouble behind the curtain.

To what vast scope the Kinetophone may attain, one may not easily predict at this time, but it is certain that entertaining the people is not the limit of its possibilities. It is clear that the orator of to-morrow can speak to millions without leaving his own fireside. The spectacle of a famous statesman, seemingly in the flesh, holding spellbound the people of two continents simultaneously is indeed an inspiring one; yet it is merely an indication of what will occur when the many brainy and resourceful men and women of the great era undertake to apply Mr. Edison's latest achievement to practical and beneficial results in their own way.

When Mr. Edison was asked what would be the effect on the stage calling as a result of the scientific simulation of their vocal and pantomimic productions, he smiled, but in a decisive manner expressed himself thus:

"We want democracy in our amusements. It is safe to say that only one out of every fifty persons has any real right to pay the prices asked in our play-houses. What chance for entertainment has the working-man who earns two dollars a day?

"The kind of success I want must affect the whole people. Actors will have to quit the stage or work for the 'movies' to get any money. This is all the better for them. They can live in one place all the time, and barnstorming will cease, and tie-walking as well."



RANDOM THOUGHTS

THE Benedict oftentimes has good reason for acting like one possessed.

THE spiritual treasures of many families are in the wife's name.

ADAM was not only the father of the race, but he was also the first of the innocent bystanders.

WHEN a woman denounces the gossip habit, she usually goes far enough to name those who ought to quit it.

It is somewhat queer how fast a big endowment can raise the cost of living at a college.

R. N. Price

"PRIZE-FIGHTER"

By May Edginton

I.

"THE question is—Hilda——" said the Honorable Neville.

"Hilda. But why?" his wife asked.

"Why?" He got up, and stood judicially on the hearth-rug, his feet planted firmly apart, and his hands under his coat-tails. He was a short man, but his latitude was such that there really was plenty of him to be imposing—only that few men are heroes to their wives, any more than to their valets. "Why? As if you don't realize that Hilda is treating Avonleigh simply disgracefully! You know it as well as I do. It's suicidal—absolutely suicidal! He's not the sort of fellow to be whistled here and there, like a confounded poodle. Are you listening, Sarah? I will have you listen. I tell you, Avonleigh is not that kind of fellow. I'm a man, and I know. I say, I *know*. Do you hear me, Sarah? Don't sit looking at me like that! I say, I'm a man——"

"God made you," said Mrs. Neville doubtfully. She was the kind of aggravating woman to indulge in that exasperating form of wit.

"Will you listen to me?" said the Honorable Neville, purpling a little. "You apparently have no influence over her, or, worse, you do not trouble to exert it."

"You apparently, Sebastian," replied his wife, "have no influence over Hilda. Or, far worse, you certainly do not trouble to exert it."

"A mother's should be the—the restraining hand—er—the—the—the guiding counsel——"

"How like a man!" said Mrs. Neville. "Go on!"

"I don't need your invitation, Sarah, to go on," said her husband, raising his voice a little. "I intend to say, here and now, exactly what I please. Exactly, in fact, what is necessary. Here's Hilda engaged to the Earl of Avonleigh. Well and good. A—er—most charming fellow, though not the barber's block that the girl seems to be yearning for. Girls are fools!"

"I agree with you," said Mrs. Neville aggravatingly. "I was one."

He glared at her.

"Was! Was! You are one, Sarah, and so's Hilda. Still, in spite of being a fool, she engaged herself to Avonleigh, and, in spite of your being a fool, you helped. Well and good. But Avonleigh is not a fool.

He's never done a stroke of work in his life, p'r'aps—lucky devil!—and he's not brilliant, nor gifted in any way, nor any sort of lady-killer, and he's got ten thousand a year. But he's not a fool. Do you think her indifference is n't as patent to him as it is to me? Indifference? Worse than that! She seems to be cultivating a regular abhorrence of him—snubs him, won't go out with him, would n't—by Jove!—would n't let him kiss her last night! She'll be wanting to break off the engagement next! If he does n't do it first, that's it! Avonleigh's very quiet, but he's thinking."

"Hilda is very pretty," said his wife frigidly, "and will no doubt have other chances."

He eyed her for a few moments in silence.

"Avonleigh's let me have a pot of money, Sarah. Don't sit looking at me like that. If a man may n't make a confidante of his wife, of whom may he? I tell you, he wants to be my son-in-law pretty badly, and you must talk to Hilda. What's this flirtation with Delamar? Avonleigh's very quiet, but he's seeing it all."

"You should n't engage handsome secretaries," she said, after a pause.

"But he's dirt cheap," said the Honorable Neville, "and a very shrewd chap in the bargain. But I won't have him fooling about with Hilda. You'll see to that, Sarah?"

"If you owe him money," she answered, "that certainly puts a different complexion on affairs. I'll give Hilda some advice. But she is sick of the engagement, and she is flirting with your wretched secretary, and she says Avonleigh looks like a prize-fighter, and behaves like one, too."

Hilda and Avonleigh came together into the room. She was a tall, very slim, very fair girl, and he—looked like a prize-fighter. A big, thick-set man, nearer forty than thirty, with a rather dogged, florid face, redeemed from ugliness by beautiful eyes and mouth. He walked very close to her, and she looked petulant. When she sank into the nearest easy chair, he placed cushions and a foot-stool for her, before greeting her parents. His infatuation was obvious.

"My dear, dear old Max," said his prospective mother-in-law, rising with a silky rustle from her chair, to gush over him, "what a nice surprise! I did n't know you were going to meet this afternoon. I thought Hilda was out shopping. Hilda, my darling, how gifted of you to run across Max, and bring him back, just as we were talking about you both. Were n't we, Sebastian? Were n't we talking about them?"

"We were," said her husband.

"What were you saying?" Avonleigh asked. He had a big voice, with a dogged ring in it to match his dogged face. He turned from contemplation of Hilda with the question, "What were you saying?"

"Ah! ah!" she rippled. Mrs. Neville was a clever woman. "Ah!

that would be tellings, would n't it, Sebastian? And you're both quite conceited enough with yourselves and with each other. Ah! Ah, I know! We were in love once, were n't we, Sebastian?"

"Once," replied Sebastian.

"You cynics!" said Avonleigh. "Ours is going to last, is n't it, Hilda?"

Hilda smiled faintly and coldly, and murmured of tea.

"What a brute I am!" said Avonleigh, springing up. "We've been rinking for two hours, Mrs. Neville, and she's awfully tired. May I ring for fresh tea? This has n't been in long? Oh, but she'd better have it really fresh." He rang without awaiting permission. "You are very pale, dear; did I keep you out too long?"

"I expect you did," said Hilda ungraciously.

"I'm so sorry, dear," said Avonleigh, his red face really troubled. "I should have thought of it. But you seemed in such ripping good form to-day—as if you could skate forever, by Jove! I met her going rinking alone, Mrs. Neville. Think of that! Had n't sent for me or thought of me. She was actually going *alone*!"

Mrs. Neville cast a little keen glance from her chilly daughter to her husband, and murmured:

"No, never!"

"I don't at all mind being alone sometimes," said Hilda rather sharply. The tea had arrived, and she sat up to sip a cup slowly, her eyes restless, and a little frown furrowing a cleft between her delicate brows. "No, I won't have cake, Max. I won't have anything. I've got a—a—a—headache."

Avonleigh sat down again and looked at her. He was no fool, as her father had surmised, and he had known for some days of the rift in his lute. It had gone a little hard with him when he pondered it, wrestling for the why and the wherefore, of nights, when he was alone. Men of his age have lost the merciful superficiality of youth. He was thirty-six before he had begun, with uncertain skill and blundering technique, to make that music. Her headache that afternoon had been his heartache. But was it a heartache?

"Go and lie down, dear," advised her mother.

"I will, I think," said Hilda, rising. She went languidly to the door, and Avonleigh followed. After he had opened it for her, he came out, too, and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Hilda!"

She turned nervously and angrily, and stared at him with wide blue eyes. He dropped his hand from her shoulder and slipped it round her waist.

"I want just to kiss you," he said very low.

"No!" she cried sharply.

"No? Why may n't I?"

"Good gracious! I—I—I—hate being—being—oh, kissed promiscuously—in—in the hall—and—and on the stairs and—and—door-mats—like a—a—housemaid. I——"

"Rubbish!" said Avonleigh, keeping his arm about her. "You've been trying to keep me off this afternoon. I—may n't kiss you?"

"I—I—don't want you to——"

"Not last night, either!"

"N-n-no!"

"Oh!" said Avonleigh, and let her go. "I hope your head will soon be quite well again. Good-by, then, dear."

Hilda walked erectly away. He turned and went back to the drawing-room. His prospective mother-in-law greeted him archly.

"Ah! Ah! You two do amuse me! But I know! We were in love once, were n't we, Sebastian?"

II.

HILDA went half way up the stairs, but as soon as she had heard the drawing-room door close, she fled down again into the hall, and into the library on her right. She opened the door quietly, closed it quietly, and stood leaning against it rather appealingly. Delamar, the secretary, stood on the hearth-rug, and looked at her. The door-panels were green, like the walls, and Hilda wore furs and black velvet, a short-skirted rinking costume, and turquoise earrings that exactly matched her blue eyes. A color had whipped her pale face, and she was slightly breathless.

"I came to the rink," said Delamar.

"I know," she answered. "I—I saw you——"

"And I saw you—skating with Lord Avonleigh, after your promise to me."

"I could n't help it, really." She came forward, holding out her hands, and he took them. "And I went out alone, so looking forward to it, and met him. He insisted on coming. What c-c-could I d-d-do?"

"Don't cry now, dearest," said Delamar.

She looked up at him, tears on her cheeks. She was young and very romantic, and Delamar was a strikingly handsome young man, somewhat, of the pink and white, barber's block type, perhaps, but, nevertheless, triumphantly comparable with Avonleigh.

"I could n't help it, really," she murmured.

She leaned her fair head, in its black fur cap, back against his shoulder, and stayed thus.

"You know how I've hated it—the engagement—ever since you made me change my mind. I can't endure things so, much longer. Truly, I can't. I must break it off."

"I would n't hurry you, darling," said Delamar hastily. "I would n't bias your decision before you have thought matters over very thoroughly. I think things must be left so just for the present" (his secretarial duties had, quite recently, given him a glimpse into her father's unsatisfactory bank-book). "You know I love you. I think you love me——"

"I do! I do!" said Hilda, looking up with implicit faith in the admission, and in him.

"Do we need know more—for the present?" said Delamar, stooping his head to kiss her again.

She cried, raising her voice rather recklessly: "But meanwhile I am engaged to Lord Avonleigh. Having to go about with him, talk to him, wear his presents, let him kiss me! You know I can't bear him. He looks like a prize-fighter, and behaves like one, too. Horrible! I'm only waiting till you tell me to break it off altogether. They'll be furious, of course. Well, what will that matter, when you and I——"

"But meanwhile," he soothed her—"meanwhile, dear, we can go on meeting like this—and I can kiss you—like this—and we leave Avonleigh out in the cold—like that. And we understand each other."

"It is glorious to understand and to be understood," said Hilda, sighing a little from sheer sentiment.

While they stood there in the firelight, her head against his shoulder, and his arm about her, the library door, which had opened and wavered uncertainly ajar half a minute, closed again very softly, and Avonleigh, who had repaired thither for a cigar-light on his way out, stood outside in the hall.

He moved away instinctively from the door, being no keyhole spy, and stood for perhaps three minutes in the hall. His florid face went slowly white, but there was red in his eye. He was giddy, and rocked on his heels a moment while he waited there, and tried to subdue the clamor in his misty brain. He dilated his nostrils as if seeking air, panted a little, clenched his big hands. The mists lifted, and he got light upon the situation, and in the same instant had bitten and bridled himself. He was very quiet, but it was a dangerous, menacing quiet.

"So they leave me out in the cold—like that." He looked round at the library door, and wanted to go back to it, but was sane enough to know that was not safe. There madness lay.

"I'm a prize-fighter sort of chap, though, ain't I, Hilda?" he was thinking in a moment or two. "And I shan't lie down. No, I shan't lie down like that. Curse you! So this is what it all meant! . . . Curse everything! What's left? . . . Nothing . . . but I shan't lie——"

A servant passing through the hall saw him and came forward to

hold his coat and open the door. He pulled himself together, gripping and steadying himself, smiled a little when he said, "Good-afternoon," and went out into the wind-swept street.

III.

AVONLEIGH went back to his rooms.

There was quiet and comfort, and, without ostentation, the acme of bachelor luxury. It was a cold day, and a large fire burned, but the fire within was such that he did not want its heat. In his bedroom beyond, his servant was laying out his clothes. The door was open, and Avonleigh called to him.

"I've come back to dress, and dine in, Richards. Cook me a chop or something here. Going out again directly after."

And he walked to the glass over the mantelpiece and surveyed his own face steadily in it. It was never a good-looking face, but it was nearly hideous just then with the passion fighting through the set mask.

"You don't like it, Hilda," he said, apropos of the reflection. "You don't like it. You hanker after that pretty pink and white wax manikin, do you? Very well . . . but I shan't lie down . . . never was a good dog. I shan't lie down."

He went into his bedroom, and the servant retired to devise some kind of meal at this short notice. Avonleigh seldom dined in.

His brain was literally seething while he dressed. He was mapping out steadily, yet deliriously, some sort of campaign. He had waited thirty-six years to let a woman into his life, and when the life was offered to one she had done thus and thus with it. At Delamar's instigation? Then Delamar must pay the price.

"Lynch law—lynch law—and good law, too!" said Avonleigh, exulting for a moment like a demon, while he put in decently and orderly his diamond studs. He had ranched and mined, and fought himself a safe way in the wildest parts of three continents, before he came into the title, in spite of the Honorable Sebastian Neville's assumption that he had never done a stroke of good work in his life.

"Delamar must pay me," he said.

And she? . . . That must come afterwards. He was going out directly after dinner, going back to the house he had just left, going to—

He had lost count of time. It seemed hardly five minutes before his man came to announce dinner, though he had been in fully an hour. He went through into the dining-room, sat down, unfolded his napkin, and looked at the cutlets, all mechanically. The servant was at his elbow, handing potatoes, pouring the wine—

"Get out!" said Avonleigh suddenly.

"My lord!"

"I said, get out!" said Avonleigh, raising bloodshot eyes. "Don't want you—wait on myself. Shut the door."

He was obeyed at once noiselessly. He was alone.

He pushed his plate away and sat at the table, looking out stilly into the room. The electric light glared on his ghastly face. The cutlets and gravy congealed, unheeded, before him. He could not eat, but he could drink; and he drank—and thought, and thought, and thought, on the one mad teeming theme.

"I've been bested, then. . . . Bested . . . by a cursed wax dummy . . . a tailor's model. . . . After all these years, to put myself, body and soul, grovelling at a girl's feet . . . go mad for her blue eyes and little white hands, and—and— Oh, God! her blue eyes, and her little white hands, and her little flower of a face! To let her fill my earth, and sit higher than my heaven . . . and now this! You can't bear me, can't you? . . . You have to go about with me, wear my presents, let me kiss you. . . . So you went straight to Delamar . . . and I s-saw him myself, c-c-cuddling you like a housemaid . . ." Then he stopped while half past eight chimed from the mantelpiece. He had begun to shake.

"D— him!" he whispered.

From the clock his eyes went vacantly to Hilda's silver-framed photograph on the mantelpiece beside it. He was close enough to see the curves of her slender figure, and the "little flower of a face" looking out upon him. It arrested him, staring at it, his jaw dropping a little.

"So you were fooling me, were you? . . . No, no. You're honest, any way. You—you're only waiting for him 'to tell you to break it off forever.' You would n't kiss me. Oh, my God! . . ."

The man was looking out upon the abomination of desolation. "*My darling!*" he quavered aloud. "*My darling! My darling! My—my—*"

He was alone. He suddenly crumpled up. He dropped his big arms heavily on the table, laid his black head down, and cried terribly. This is n't for you and me. There's one thing, above all, that the Avonleighs of life would not have us look upon, and that is their tears. Come out!

IV.

"You wanted me?" said Hilda, trailing into the library, on receiving Avonleigh's message. "Yes, we've finished dinner, but I was just going out. What is it? There is n't anything the mat——?"

Then his face stopped her.

"I'm afraid you—won't—be able—to go out," said Avonleigh very slowly. He had not taken off his overcoat. He stood against the table,

leaning one hand upon it, and the overhead light glared full upon his strange face.

"Not be able? What do you mean?"

"I'm not quite sure—just what will prevent you," said Avonleigh, breathing hard.

She gazed at him uncertainly, beginning to tremble, not knowing why, and reiterating, "What do you mean, Max? Wh-wh-what——"

Then he could hurl it at her, his meaning, his purpose, his ultimate fury.

"You stand there and ask me what I mean! I'll tell you. With no beating about the bush, no lies, no circumvention. All that is n't in my line. I leave it to Del——" But neither was it in his line to cry down an absent rival, and he bit off the word. "What do I mean? This. I came to this room directly after you'd gone upstairs for headache cure this afternoon. It was n't empty." She was staring at him then, white-cheeked and white-lipped. "You know what I found."

A sort of long, loud silence.

"You know what I found?" said Avonleigh, thrusting his head forward.

"Yes," she whispered. "Yes." She ran round to the other side of the table, looked at him fearfully across it. She whispered again: "Yes—yes——"

"What's to be done?" said Avonleigh, nearly as low. "Nothing? What's to be said? Nothing? But Lord help you and me! I'm not the kind of man to be cheated, and lie down under it. I've always stood and fought. What was that you said? I looked like a prize-fighter, and behaved like one. . . ."

"You—heard that?" she gasped.

He said savagely: "Oh, I was n't at the keyhole! I looked in openly. But—but—you were too—absorbed. . . . Well, I say, I'm the kind who punishes. *Punishes* . . . you hear? That was your estimate of me, too, though, was n't it? I forgot that. You know what to expect in me. Then, look here."

He had kept his hand in his overcoat pocket. He withdrew it slowly, held it out to her, palm open. And in it lay a little, deadly, polished thing. She cried out at it—quivered, wailed, sickened. She had never in all her life before been right up against primitive rage and desperate despair. Formerly he had been quick to alleviate her little-finger aches. Now her miserable fright was as nothing to him—a slight condition of the hell in which he found himself. At the moment he was hardly sane. He patted the revolver, and looked at it, and went on speaking.

"I've used it two or three times abroad, where I learned that lynch law is pretty often God's law, and better than any man's. Now it's for you, or Delamar, I think—or both of you. . . . I don't know . . ."

She began creeping to the door, her eyes on his face. He got mechanically between her and exit. She retreated again to the farthest side of the room, and cowered there, nearly fainting, drooping against the wall. His eyes took in her terror, and he pulled himself together, vaguely aghast.

"What am I saying?" he asked, passing a handkerchief over his wet forehead. "Not you, my darling! Not you! Forgive me! . . . I hardly know what I am saying . . . or doing. . . . You love Delamar?"

"I—yes," she gasped, shutting her eyes.

No retribution came. She opened them, and saw Avonleigh considering her strangely.

"You think he loves you?" he said abruptly. "What stood in your way, then?"

"I—I—I—we," she began, answering his questions in sheer fright—"we—he is poor. I—"

"You have nothing," said Avonleigh. "And he wouldn't take you so. He wants to make sure what you've got first. But you say you love him—then you're barred to me. Well, so I've nothing to say for myself, after all. I love you better than heaven or earth, and I can't have you. You want Delamar. Well, if you want to buy him, buy him. When we were first engaged, I made a will in your favor, leaving you all I could away from the entail. I've learned to provide for contingencies, knocking about, you see. Well, perhaps you'll be able to pay his—price."

"What do you mean?" she cried, pulling herself erect. "Stop! Stop! Stop! What are you going to do?"

She was starting forward.

"Stay there," he ordered.

She stood trembling.

"Shut your eyes a moment," said Avonleigh.

She moaned and shut them. But—

But in a moment she disobeyed, looked, saw the revolver at his temple, screamed, flung the nearest object at hand at him, a second's fraction before the shot rang out.

When the servants ran in, Avonleigh lay back inertly on the couch, and she stood over him, wringing her hands, shaking and sobbing. The room was filled with a babble and chorus of questions. He was quite conscious. He opened his eyes, and looked at Hilda, and she stared back at him, in perhaps the first flash of real understanding that had ever passed between them. They began asking how?—why?—what?—

"Lord Avonleigh was s-s-showing me a re-re-revolver he had b-b-bought," wept Hilda, "and it w-w-w-went off in his h-h-hand—"
Avonleigh fainted.

V.

THEY put him to bed, and doctors and nurses were shortly in attendance. He was shot about the scalp, and one side of his face was badly grazed, but the book Hilda had caught up and hurled at him at that moment had shaken his hand—as her scream had done—and saved his life. For the rest, every one received her explanations with implicit belief. He was showing her a revolver he had bought, and it went off in his hand.

The Honorable Neville, perhaps, salted that piece of information well before digesting it, but—he owed Avonleigh "a pot of money," and he was a man who had attained the supreme art of minding his own business.

Hilda slept very little that night, and early next morning, after an attempt at breakfast, sought Delamar in the library. The secretary, pale and angry-eyed, was hastily collecting papers together.

"G-g-good-morning," sighed Hilda, standing against the green panelled door, in a blue morning-frock.

Delamar, looking at her coldly, replied: "Good-morning. This is a pretty stroke of business you have done!"

She looked at him wide-eyed. He did not fly to kiss her, although they were alone. He stood by her father's desk, sorting papers.

"Your father is turning me out this morning," he explained briefly, and went on docketing papers.

(The Honorable Neville, when roused to effort, was expeditious. Moreover, in connubial privacy, he had been saying to his wife: "I told you so! I told you so!" And had been greatly strengthened by her subdued demeanor and want of attack.)

"T-t-turning you out!" sighed Hilda, clasping her hands on her bosom.

"T-t-turning me out," replied Delamar.

"Then, I go with you!" cried Hilda heroically.

"Certainly not!" said Delamar. "I am practically penniless. You, I believe, are the same." He had lately assured himself of that. "You will stay here and marry Avonleigh." He sighed, and added, "I could not ask any woman to share my lot."

"You could ask me!" cried Hilda. "Whatever it is, I would share it with you. What would anything matter, since we should be together? We would share, each with the other."

"My leanings are anti-socialistic," said Delamar. "I have never shared any possessions of mine in my life, and I do not intend to. You had better go back to Avonleigh. I hear he is not much damaged, though his beauty may be a little impaired."

He was sore and furious, and he literally could not help it.

"I—but I practically—broke our engagement last night," she stammered.

"Then, may I call you a fool?" said Delamar.

The color whipped into her cheeks. She asked, half fiercely: "What do you mean?" and, "How—how d-d-dare you!"

"My time is nearly up," he said, looking at the clock. "Your father gave me ten minutes. I'd rather go inside of that limit. Sit down and think things over quietly, and then go and make it up with Avonleigh. Curse Avonleigh!"

"He's worth a thousand of you!" said Hilda, that knowledge suddenly breaking in upon her, filling her heart, coloring her cheeks, firing her eyes. "You! How dare you, I say! You've made love to me! K-k-kissed me! Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Well," he said, with a short laugh, "I did n't think you minded!"

That ultimate insult! She swept up and down the room, and stormed. She was furiously angry, and deeply humiliated. While she raved at him, she—realized herself. She began to realize Avonleigh, too, who "loved her better than heaven and earth." She realized many things, hitherto without the scope of her philosophy. They crowded into the minute: mighty revelations all in that cameo-space. Among them, she began to be amazed at the ease with which she could part from Delamar, after these six weeks of clandestine love-making. Glad relief crept in there, too.

"I must go," he said loudly, interrupting her. "Will you say good-by?"

"Good-by," said Hilda, panting a little, at the other side of the room.

He crossed over to her.

"Not like that?" he insinuated.

"No, not like that," said Hilda, suddenly losing every vestige of dignity. "Like—this!" And, flinging up that "little white hand" beloved of Avonleigh, boxed his ears soundly.

"Oh, you—little—demon!" said Delamar.

She threw herself down upon the couch to cry.

The ten minutes were exceeded. Delamar went out.

"My dear," said Mrs. Neville, stopping her daughter on the stairs, "were you going up to inquire for our dear Max? Because, if so, I can assure you that he is much bet——"

"I am glad to hear it," said Hilda. "I was not going up to inquire for him, but to see him."

"My dear! But he is quite alone."

Hilda went on up the stairs, and replied mutinously over her shoulder:

"That's what I want—to see him alone."

Hilda pursued her way. She tried to keep a composed front, but she still trembled from the scene in the library (at what was before her, too), and tears washed into her blue eyes, and overflowed. The first thing Avonleigh saw when, watching the door—he had heard her step outside, and he knew it among the other comings and goings—he saw her enter, was her tears glistening on her pale cheeks. He was bandaged about the head and face, "his beauty a little impaired." She was not used to sickness. The quiet and the bandages frightened her, smote her with guilty reproach. She had done all that! It was appalling. She hung back by the door.

It seemed a long silence.

"Well," said Avonleigh, watching her—"well, what are you here for, Hilda?"

He was a very hopeless man. He was already beginning to feel contempt of himself, too, in the sane morning, for what he called the melodrama of last night.

"To——" said Hilda, in a fainting voice.

She came forward slowly to the bed, blue-gowned, blue-eyed, tearful. His gaze was fastened on the "little flower of a face," and his heart drummed.

"To—say—g-g-good-m-m-morning," quavered Hilda, and sat down on the bed, put her trembling arms about his neck, and kissed him.

A good morning . . . a glorious bright morning. . . "Thank God for it!" said Avonleigh.



DISCONTENT

BY FREDERICK H. MARTENS

"I WOULD I were an elegy!" the border-ballad sighed.

"The characters who filled my feet
Would keep on faring forth to meet
The Scot, or Southron raider fleet,
Beside the Teviot's tide."

"A border-ballad would I be!" (the elegy gave breath).

"Its heroes see a bit of sun
Before their earthly course is run;
But mine are done e'er I've begun
To mourn about their death."

THE CRUDSTONE CONQUEST

By Will Levington Comfort

Author of "Fate Knocks at the Door," "Routledge Rides Alone," etc.

CRUDSTONE had decided to marry. Serious reflection covering a period of years had brought him to decision. He was approaching forty. Experience with women during the last double decade had narrowed the field to two. . . . It must be told that, until very recently, Crudstone had not believed he could come to this. His knowledge of men, life, business, and young girls had given him for a long time a very sound and sane bachelor spirit. Of course he had tolerated women, and had learned to enjoy smiling into their eyes, as he endeavored to conjecture the extent of crassness and vacuity which existed behind.

For Crudstone was a business man. Of course he could discuss books and art with certain kinds of women, but in ideal to himself and friends, he was the astute man of down-town affairs. He believed in Commerce, delighted to show how Art and Philosophy were called forth to fashion the victories of Commerce, and how ethics lost their substance and Beauty paled, apart from reckonable commodities. Crudstone was punctilious, adjustably honest, healthy; indeed, after considering himself at length, was wont to inquire of Crudstone, "What man can be more?"

It was not that Crudstone was in love. Only, he had come to weary a little of bachelor routine, especially during winter evenings when he was disinclined to go forth. Putting on his vinous brilliance in certain club-rooms brought a morning tension; indeed, such nights added girth and wasted energy. Then, again, he had felt the need of a domestic establishment to entertain men of larger financial holdings. In short, a woman would be useful.

There was Miss Agnew, twenty-five, piquant, bubblesome, surpassingly naïve; of no particular pedigree, but very much an individual. Crudstone felt he might do worse; and yet Miss Agnew must somehow be made to feel the great importance of her rise in fortune and position, should she marry him. Frankly, a difficulty was to be encountered here. She had a way of regarding her world, as it was, with content; additions were accounted in her mind luck. Witty, pretty, not unculti-

vated, but altogether undistinguished, Miss Agnew rode lightly but deeply into his trained desires for possession.

Mrs. Winston was also under consideration—a widow in the early indefinites; daughter of, and wife of the late—all this quite flawless. A beautifully dressed woman; a trained woman. In fact, as Crudstone reviewed his possibilities linked with Mrs. Winston's, he wished that the flashy Miss Agnew would not obtrude. . . . The latter would be fun, a luscious adventure. It would fittingly round out his experience to hook and play and net such a girl; yet from the standpoint of business—well, Bleecker, Edgewood, Kramer, Boylan, and other dollar-kings, would find him more interesting in a social way as the husband of Kate Winston. There was all the difference between a pick-up and a catch. As a matter of fact, Boylan was n't married, but his uptown aloofness could not hold out against Mrs. Winston's lure in her new domesticity. Boylan was the big bright figure in the Crudstone cabinet of business ideals. . . . Business instinct did it. Miss Agnew was put away with a pang, and the Winston campaign began.

Several evenings later, he was admitted to the old Winston house; and several evenings later still. Followed two or three first-night performances, and people said that Kate Winston looked familiar in her old box. From seven to ten weeks, Crudstone planned to be sufficient before stating his suit. In this interval he encountered one or two obstacles, but not, in his opinion, prohibitive ones. He felt in the case of Mrs. Winston a business-like calm which he realized, and believed she must realize, could come only to one who had his world-poise developed to a nicety. She was full-modelled and gracious, occasionally surprising in her perceptions. Frequently, to her remarks there was such delicacy of point that it was not until later in the solitude of his own rooms that he quickened to their penetration. All this was relishable—indeed, like finding untold values in a new-bought horse. Then, in her home she was unquestionably an adornment, gowned with the beauty of gift-books, and purely poetic in her graciousness. True, there was much disconcerting humor about her, and to be encountered among those whom he met at her house. People gave evidence of understanding flippant matters with quite the intensity with which Crudstone knew business—so that the latter always felt surer of himself with Mrs. Winston alone than at her parties; but surest of all when he had reached his own rooms, and his full-weighted self came back to cheer him. Indeed, it is only in the solitudes that a man can build an adequate structure for a woman to enter.

The two were having a midnight bite at Tetramini's after a play which Mrs. Winton had appeared to enjoy full-length. He had thought the drama a bore, and was glad now he had not said so. Her

enthusiasm stimulated him. In a moment of silence which followed, he suddenly knocked the dog-shores away, and his proposal was launched:

"Mrs. Winston," he said, leaning toward her, but studying the sparkle in the stem of his wine-glass, "I consider it a great privilege to know you. We business men are so occupied by the constancy of the battle down-town, that I fear we miss certain fine elements of life, which it is the province of women to study over and delight in. You, of all the women I have ever known, are the perfect mistress of these finer delights. The time has come for me to devote myself to the—what I really mean is, since I have known you, a sense of the real joys of living—the indescribable delights of companionship, you know—"

Mrs. Winston was staring at him. Her expression, at first whimsical, with an occasional dart of seriousness, became for an instant tense about the lips, with a narrowing of eyelids—then finally gave way to purest mirth.

"Why, Mr. Crudstone!" she cried. "Who would have thought such a humorist was hidden in you! I never guessed it. You are inimitable!"

He had only half-cleared the ways. For a moment his craft dangled, as it were. His emotions were conflicting, and in the maze of them he chose to encourage her in the discovery of his perfect sense of humor. It was not until he had slid into the deep on this lead, that he realized his romance was strained, battered.

"And how perfectly you knew your subject!" Mrs. Winston went on. "Why, a younger woman might have taken it as a serious proposal!"

With great effort he had formed his features into a half-humorous expression. So that when he replied, "Why not?" she only laughed more heartily.

"No gentleman would ever deny such a possibility," she declared. "It has been delicious—the whole evening! I always insist upon being taken home at the supreme moment."

Crudstone was bereft of words. Internally, he was clutched in that polar chill, the fear of being laughed at. His own rooms restored him somewhat, though he could not sleep—for the inner tingling which followed the frost. He reviewed all that he had said and found it very good, save for the fatal pause. While he could not divine what had made her laugh, he was inclined to regard her frivolity as a structural lesion of the Winston character; and always out of the mystery, challenging his better nature, arose the pathetic, neglected face of Rose Agnew.

Grew upon him now the conviction that he should have gone to Miss Agnew first. Ten weeks had passed in which he had scarcely

seen that flashing young lady. Certainly she must know where the bulk of his later evenings had been spent, and with whom. Women have subtle intelligence systems. . . . Of course Crudstone granted to himself that the Winston issue was not closed. By no means. Something sounder and deeper than the business brain of the man, however, warned him that it were better to let that lady and proposition simmer. So once more the Agnew vision lived with him in the silences and shadows of the bachelor house. . . . She was the sort of girl one could call by 'phone, a jolly, good-natured girl—Crudstone checked short in this kind of thinking. As Mrs. Crudstone, she must not be so jolly and good-natured. She must put on the Crudstone dignity. . . . Yet her voice trailed bewitchingly across the city when he did call her, and for hours her charming sentence, "Why, it really can't be that you want to see *me* again, Mr. Crudstone!" smoothed and graded the inequalities of mind.

Positively, she was magnetism for the eye of man on the night of this first going-out together; so vitally fresh, too, in cheek and gesture and mind; sheer attractions, the low tones of her voice, the play of her eyes, the toss of head and rise of breath. Crudstone began to delight in his belated decision to capture this vine-hung citadel. It occurred to him that he had best forget business interests in this matter of marriage; that Crudstone had to live with the chosen woman, not the men and their wives who were higher in the kingdom of commerce. Boylan might possibly prove no more untamable with one than the other, and Boylan was the man, most of all, whom he wished to cultivate. Crudstone became absorbed in the stimulus arising from this reckless heresy to trade. And as he leaned forward toward her, with the white light of the theatre upon his face, he felt his effectiveness, that he had come into his own. The imperious substance of manhood within him would pluck this flower, regardless of ground-rules and the world's gardener.

Only, when the theatre was lit again after the first act, he discovered Mrs. Winston in the box opposite. Beside her was none other than Boylan. The widow smiled at him. Crudstone felt that he dipped in crimson as he bowed.

"Dear Mrs. Winston," Miss Agnew murmured. "How well she looks! Is n't that Mr. Boylan with her?"

Crudstone cleared his throat. A blight had fallen upon the youth of his tissues. He was not the live rubber of a moment before. With these two women signalling to each other—for all he knew—behind their glasses, he felt the world of romance as narrow as the theatre, and the distress of his own mind as brilliantly lit. The spirited Miss Agnew became more bubblesome and blithe. Back of the brown brilliance of her eyes was much that he coveted; and much more than he

knew—for instance, the early processes of a romantic game, enchantingly dear to her temperament.

"Ah, Mr. Crudstone, I have had a rare evening," she said at the elevator of her apartment-house. "Do you know, I was afraid you had forgotten me entirely; and yet I could n't think what I had done. It is n't pleasant to be neglected—you know what I mean. One does n't think of what a boy does, but when a man whom one has come to count upon as her solid and invariably interesting friend deserts for weeks and weeks—really, I was quite unhappy."

Crudstone mumbled inadequately until rescued. He left pleasantly warm. . . . Next morning down-street, Boylan stopped him with a remark which Crudstone did not catch in full, but which he pieced together to the effect that Miss Agnew was "certainly some joy-grapes to look at," at least, to one sitting across a theatre. Boylan was one of those gentlemen to whom impertinence is humor. He was a man to be feared; a man who got what he wanted. Often in so doing, he had lifted Crudstone into rare altitudes of admiration. The downtown *coups* of Boylan were cameos of their kind. . . . Two days later, Crudstone received a letter from Mrs. Winston. The writing on the soft gray envelope disturbed him, and the message also:

. . . Mr. Boylan has placed a box at my disposal for Monday night next. It appeals to me as singularly joyous in prospect for you and Miss Agnew to join us. I have written her and trust that previous engagements will not conflict. . . .

With dry throat, Crudstone prayed that for once Miss Agnew might have another engagement, but in a 'phone call which shortly followed it was ordained otherwise. Crudstone found the seats arranged so that Miss Agnew was available to Boylan, who wasted not the opportunity. Moreover, such were the acoustics, that the heart of whispers was filed for reference in the delicate understandings of each woman. It was not until the play was over and the original pairs joined again, that Crudstone was drawn in from deep and strangling waters. This was the intelligence which quickened him:

"You certainly have a strong and admiring friend in Mr. Boylan," she declared, in the awed tone of a stenographer speaking of two magnates. "Would you care to hear what he said?"

"Why, yes, of course——"

"Mr. Boylan said that it was common talk in exclusive business circles to the effect that you would be numbered among the mid-West millionaires within two years."

These were sweet zones for the commercial mind. Thus was the evening lifted from havoc. Miss Agnew was not seen for a few days. Boylan now began to hail him almost every day from some angle of

the Street. Finally, on Saturday, the two partook of a hurried luncheon together. The magic word *copper* was spoken. *Milecete copper*. This word had haunted the down-town intelligence of Crudstone for days. Uttered now by the keenest manipulator of his acquaintance, it bore down upon the plotting surfaces of his ganglia with a fury of significance. . . . Another luncheon with Boylan—tightened copper tension—and this sentence uttered with the peculiar Boylan drawl:

"This copper stuff is going to make things altogether too big for one man to hold. I'm taking on a partner the first of the year. . . . By the way, had n't we better take the girls out some night soon?"

"I was just thinking of that," Crudstone replied hastily, though his brain was booming with the partnership conception—Boylan, Crudstone & Co.—Crudstone & Boylan—and the first remark, rich as pirate galleons to his ears, "This copper stuff is going to make things altogether too big for one man to hold." . . . "Miss Agnew will be back to-day, I believe," he added. "I'll arrange, if you like——"

"Bully!" said Boylan, dashing off to the call of work.

Crudstone was already strongly entrenched in the copper league. To him the day was big above dreams. Boylan had taken one of his formidable fancies. Miss Agnew delightedly arranged a further party. There was in the air a blood-bounding spirit of conquest. . . . Two years to be numbered among the men of unreckonable fortune! Boylan had whispered this. Crudstone had given himself five years, but he had not considered copper or a partner. Boylan was right. Two years were quite enough. . . . He was to join Miss Agnew for dinner that night at her own home. On the way, he felt strong enough to take her in his arms at once and tell her why at his leisure.

Crudstone believed he conducted the formality of proposal very well that night. Not only did he profit by the other, but Miss Agnew fell into his general comprehension as Mrs. Winston had never done. The parrying and flashing of feminine science unquestionably brought out his all, and he was dismayed a little that the capitulation was not instantaneous.

"I must think," she said. "It would not be fair for me to answer now. You bring such words to the life of a poor girl. I felt honored by your friendship—how could I dream that it meant this? I must have a week. . . . Oh, you eager, hungry bear! Until next Thursday then—not a minute sooner! . . . No, not that—that would not help me to decision!"

Crudstone believed in himself, and foamed silently with great animal happiness. . . . Copper, Boylan, Agnew—these were the links which chained him to achievement. . . . It was copper week. Copper was the word whispered in the arcanums of capital.

"Hold until 141," Boylan whispered. "It will go higher—but

ease then. The investment will be doubled, so far as I'm concerned—when she hits 'forty."

So copper slipped up through the 'twenties and 'thirties with a fine unfaltering stride. Crudstone bought as steadily, up to 'thirty-five, his dollars multiplying, his dreams empurpling. He looked groomed but damp, glowed with health like a prize-sire of Devons, for the surfaces of him throve miraculously under the many joys.

There was no remaining in office Thursday forenoon; his correspondence was scarcely glanced at; a letter marked "personal" remained unopened. Abroad, he passed Boylan, and chose to take cheer and stimulus from the easy wave of the other's hand. At noon, with *Milecete Copper* at 139 flat, he met Miss Agnew, who was bewitchingly white.

"Is there no place where we may get out of the crowd?" she asked, seemingly apprehensive in the rush of men out for a bite.

Crudstone took it for a good omen, that she desired quiet in this of all days. His eyes roved over her continually with the delight of possession. This—then the Boylan partnership. . . . He took her to a place where fowls were broiled upon hickory embers, and known to crowds only at night. . . . The luncheon was long, and he tarried, regarding her over an excellent Moselle.

"You'll marry me, dear?"

Miss Agnew became tense and frightened. "I cannot marry you!"

Besides the shock, there was a deep vague disturbance to Crudstone in the way she begged him not to ask her again. . . . It was not in him vitally to be hurt, but he was rankled, and the woman who did not want him had suddenly become mysteriously equipped with new attractions. . . . At five minutes to three he strolled back into his office. His manager stared at him hollow-eyed.

"Where in God's name have you been? I've had a dozen messengers paging you everywhere——"

"What's wanted?"

"The bottom has dropped out of *Milecete*. Lake Superior has broken into the mine or something. A *Standard* extra intimates that the weakness has been known for a long time—that the stock has been boosted by false energy—Boylan energy, to my notion."

Crudstone sank into a chair. Familiar objects of the office were vague, flighty things before the vacant fright of his eyes.

So all the near and shining peaks of fortune had slipped over the horizon, and for Crudstone were the unmitigated lowlands he had known years before. He did not leave the office at once. He was sadly out of training to stand suffering. Predicaments he had laughed at when other men were the principals, drove home one by one upon his great untrained flesh. . . . He saw Boylan unloading vast

spaces of mine upon him—a mine with a crumbling partition. Another extra reported that Boylan had taken a special north to the broken mine, and added that there was excellent deer-hunting up Superior way. He saw what it had meant to him to go to a quiet place for luncheon. This was a bludgeon. Finally an unopened letter caught his eye. It was unsigned and read:

One who wishes you no harm, and has absolutely no personal interest, wishes to ask if you are quite sure of yourself in putting all in a copper kettle.

This would have given him the helm in time to weather the gale, had he read it when it came. Had it not been marked "personal," his manager would have read it in time. The communication was traced to Mrs. Winston, who reiterated that there had been absolutely no personal interest, but that she had been afraid, and would have warned a stranger under the circumstances. . . . Boylan did take on a partner the first of the year—an uptown partner, associated in Crudstone's mind with a certain fatal fowl grilled upon hickory embers.



IMMUTABILIS

BY MAHLON LEONARD FISHER

THE same blue sky, the same wide waste of sea,
 The same green fields at even and at dawn,
 The same swift-cycling seasons,—now the wan,
 Weird pomp of Winter, now Spring's pageantry,—
 That they of Eden knew, we know; and we,
 As they, but watch the same white stars awake
 From out their day-long lethargy and flake
 The farthest arch of Dusk, unendingly.

And what was mystery then is mystery still!
 Man has advanced but slowly: all his thought
 Is vain beside one blosmy marvel wrought
 Of seeming nothingness; the fern-fronds fill
 His heart with wonder; and the tiniest blade
 Of grass keeps its wee secret, unafraid!

HIS WIFE

By Temple Bailey

AS Mortimer came up from the links to the porch of the country club, he was conscious of the constrained attitude of the men who greeted him. The fight was on, and, with his jaw set, he dropped into a chair, determined to win out.

Then arrived Dicky Dolliver: "Say, all of you, Maude and I want you at Granite Cliff for the week-end."

There was a murmur of delighted acceptance.

"It will be a sort of house-warming for you and Janet," Dicky assured Mortimer. And silence fell on the group.

From a wicker chair in the west corner came the first negative.

"By Jove, Dicky, I forgot! We've a dinner on."

The others found equally plausible excuses.

Dicky stared at them blankly. "Oh, I say, look here, you can't all be tied up, not this time of year."

They were, they persisted, and—it would be impossible.

Mortimer's keen eyes accused them. "Not one of you has an engagement you can't break." He turned to Dicky. "The trouble," he said, "is Janet."

In the stiff silence which followed he seemed to gather himself together.

"We might as well have it out," he said at last. "You fellows don't like my marriage, and you want me to take my punishment. Dicky's been away for a year, or perhaps he would n't be so rash——"

The boy flared at that. "I'm not a cad, and—and I've seen your wife, Justin."

Mortimer's glance flashed upon him radiantly. Then to the frigid group: "Perhaps if you knew the whole story—— You must do me the justice to listen while I tell it. After that, if you want to make miserable the woman who saved me from death—from worse than death——"

He had their interest now. Even Herrick, the arbiter of social destinies, bent attentive eyes upon him.

"Not that your scorn could touch her," Mortimer flamed. "You can't hurt her. But she would grieve if she knew that my marriage to her had cut me out of your friendship. I want to save her that. Otherwise, she needs nothing that you can give her."

"That's right," was Dicky's confirmation. "If you fellows have n't seen her, you've got something coming to you."

"Go ahead, Justin," said Herrick, and motioned to a hovering waiter.

Mortimer sat on the porch rail and looked out into the purple October twilight and talked to them. They could see only the vague outline of his big figure, his long, lazy equipment of beauty and strength.

"You know my boyhood," he began, "and most of you knew my father. A great man, with one great fault. And you know, too, that I inherited that fault. You remember my mother, and how little she was able to understand either of us. She had the ideals of the women of her upbringing; she was a sweet saint, ready for Paradise, but with no knowledge of the fight of the two natures which are within men.

"I was twenty-one before I knew that I was controlled by a master stronger than myself. I did n't admit it even then, but there were times when all my strength of will could not hold me steady.

"I think most of the men of my set understood where I was drifting. Dicky here"—his hand went out affectionately towards the boy—"used to urge me to go away—anywhere. Once he begged me to marry, but I don't think he dared suggest it a second time. I was n't going to let any girl that I knew undertake the discouraging task of reform. Yet I liked the companionship of women, and they danced with me, flirted with me; but not one of them held out a helping hand."

He drew a long breath. "That is why Janet means so much to me. I wish I could make you see her as she looked that first day. I had left a city full of slim-hipped, hobble-skirted women, rouged and powdered, with pearls in their ears; a race of civilized barbarians, to whom religion meant little, to whom money and social position meant everything, to whom motherhood was only a name, and wifehood a temporary state.

"And upon the shores of a sapphire lake I came upon a girl, wide-bosomed, deep-eyed, hanging clothes on a line in a May day wind, which blew a drift of apple-blossoms over her from the trees beyond. She had on an old green gingham gown, with the sleeves turned up, and the collar turned in to show her white neck.

"My quest for accommodations had taken me through the country. My doctor had sent me away from the city—away from temptation. But not until I came upon the girl in the apple orchard had I cared to stop.

"I asked if they had rooms, and was told competently that they had. We went upstairs to look at them. There was a rag-carpet, woven blue and white; the bed was an old, four-posted cherry one, with knitted trimming on the counterpane. Between the snowy muslin curtains was a glimpse of the blossoming world below.

"The girl who showed me the room, the girl who had hung the clothes on the line, the girl who made terms with dignity and with perfect unconsciousness, was—Janet.

"Her mother was out, and my request for lunch was met somewhat seriously. Could I eat on the kitchen table? I could, and I had strawberries and cream, raisin-cake, a ball of white Dutch cheese, and a little jar of currants put up in honey.

"Janet left me to eat alone, and went on with her washing. I could see her with her elbows deep in the suds, the apple-blossoms drifting over her—a shower of fragrant snow.

"In the mid-afternoon, three children came home from school, and at night the mother. She was a second edition of Janet. Age had not touched her, except to give her a deeper bloom and perhaps a heavier step. Scotswomen, both of them, they asked grace before meat, and counted only those things worth-while which made life better and worthier.

"I settled down there to read and grow stronger.

"But I found things to do. On Tuesday Janet ironed, and brought her board out under the trees. So I read to her, and found her possessed of a simple philosophy. On Wednesday she mended, and I placed her heaped-up basket beside my chair. We talked of many things, and I found her a thinker.

"On Thursday she baked, and I stoned raisins for her. On Friday she swept and cleaned, and I was turned out, and discovered that the time hung heavily on my hands. On Saturday the mother had a half-holiday; so I insisted on a picnic, and took them all for a drive to the lake, and we had our supper there.

"It was in those days that my first feeling of reverence for woman was waked.

"The girls that I had met were a protected class, and we men had conspired to keep them so. I had taken my feeling for their undoubted innocence for reverence; but now I was to learn that I had always thought of them, subconsciously, as an inferior sex—the masculine in me had refused to make concessions to them.

"But here was a woman who ruled a little kingdom. For I soon found that Janet was queen of her small circle. Her mother was the widow of a Scotch clergyman. They had come to America in Janet's childhood, and when the father died the two women set themselves to do what was at their hand. The girl might have taught in the district school, but there was more money in their primitive laundry work, and they had no pride greater than their pride of independence.

"A younger brother was working his way, with their help, through college. Janet told me of him, and showed me his picture.

"'There are many temptations in town,' I warned her, but she shook her head.

"'He's a strong laddie,' she said.

"I learned thus indirectly to know her contempt for weakness. Can

you imagine my humiliation, therefore, when, one night, she found me, very late, curled up under the old apple-tree, dazed and incoherent? I had gone to town that day, ostensibly on business, but secretly mad for that which had been withheld for weeks.

"She got me into the house quietly; and the next morning was mending day. I took my book to a far corner of the orchard—I was ashamed to claim her society after such a revelation; but presently I saw her coming towards me, with her basket held high, swinging along with step as light as Diana's under a hunting moon.

"She sat down beside me and talked first of her work; but she was very straightforward, and at last she came to the subject that was in both of our minds.

"‘How did it happen?’ she asked.

"‘I had to tell her the truth. ‘I went for it.’

"‘She laid down her work and looked at me. ‘It’s your master?’

"‘I’m afraid, yes.’

"‘I saw the color flame into her cheeks. It seemed to me that she trembled, but I was not sure, for she had herself steady.

"‘Then it is something to fight?’

"‘I nodded.

"‘And you came up here to do it?’

"‘Yes.’

"‘She seemed to stiffen suddenly; but when I looked into her eyes they were deep wells of tears. Yet her voice was unshaken and her hand was firm as she leaned forward and laid it on mine.

"‘You are not going to town again,’ she said, ‘for—let’s set the time—six months? Shall it be six months, Mr. Mortimer?’

"‘If she had said six years, I should have consented. It seemed to me that she radiated strength. I felt that my future was builded upon a rock.

"‘We said no more after that; but in the days that followed, I found that she drew me towards things which kept my hands and head busy. I helped her in the garden; she had the children bring to me their lesson problems; she took long walks with me along the rough shore at the hotel, upon the cliffs.’

The stars were out now, and a little crescent moon. From a distant wing of the house came the tinkle of glass and the murmur of voices. Dinner was being served to belated golfers and to the first early evening arrivals.

"‘There was another thing,’ the quiet voice went on. ‘It’s not easy to tell; but I want you to know her. Whenever there was a quiet time of work, she brought a little worn book and had me read marked passages aloud—verses like this: ‘The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God,’ and, ‘Lead me to the rock which is higher than I.’

"I cannot say that she waked in me a conscious religious response, but she led me gradually toward an ideal. I began to see in her something that I had never before recognized in any woman. I had no thought of love. It was not until four months had passed that I knew what Janet meant to me.

"In these months there had been contests of will, when I had set my face steadily towards town, and she, as steadily, had set hers against it. And every time she won. I think it wore on her a little, for the color went out of her cheeks, and there were shadows under her eyes. Her mother insisted that she must have rest—a trip to an aunt's in a near-by town. But Janet would not go, and I knew why she would not.

"'Are you waiting for six months to pass before you will leave?'" I asked her one morning, as I followed her into the orchard.

"'Oh, no,' was her guarded reply. Then, because she could not lie, she looked at me, and said quickly, 'Do you think it would be safe?'"

"'Of course,' I bragged. 'It has been four months—and I could stay here. Anyhow, it will be a test. Let's try it.'"

"'But if things should go wrong,' she cried, 'I think I should know it—I believe I should know——'"

"She packed her little trunk after that, and I took her to the station. 'Dear Janet,' I told her, at the last, 'you have been a tower of strength to me.'"

"As I drove home in the early twilight, the spirit of her sweetness and steadfastness was upon me, and it lasted a week. Then came a season of rains. The orchard was a sodden swamp. The wind howled in the eaves and made my room a haunted corner. There was no haven but the kitchen, and even that place of cheer failed for comforting; for it was there that I most missed Janet.

"And then the whisper of evil came to me. A devil stood all day at my elbow and urged, 'Go to town—it's there.'"

"I tried to fortify myself with her weapons—the little worn testament, hard work, exercise—but all had lost their power.

"Once I thought I would go to her, but something held me back. 'Surely you are not a weakling,' whispered my tormentor, 'that you should put your burdens on a woman's shoulders!'"

"It was on a rainy Monday afternoon that I went to town. I stayed four days, and was then drawn irresistibly back. I knew I was not worthy to stand upon the threshold of that homely cottage, but through the blur of my consciousness was the thought of the One Woman. I must get to her or die.

"Yet it was not physical death that I feared, but the death of that which she had waked in me. I did not want to go back to the sordidness of my old life. It was as if I had had a glimpse of heaven when I had known—hell."

There was a long pause before he went on. The shrilling of insects seemed to emphasize the stillness. Lights twinkled along the line of the curving roadway. Now and then an automobile swerved up to the steps, discharged its laughing load, and went on. Women in light gowns, men in evening clothes, were illumined for a moment by the swinging lantern above the entrance, and then disappeared in the shadows.

"It was dark and stormy when I arrived at the station. I plodded heavily along the muddy road, my steps uncertain, my head bursting. The wind beat upon me, and the rain soaked me, but I did not care. I began to sing loudly, and, singing, staggering, must have followed the wrong road, for I found myself presently on the shore of the lake. It was a rocky shore, and I had come out on the edge of a cliff.

"God knows what thoughts go through a man's brain at such a time, but suddenly I was consumed by a desire to quench the burning fire of my torment in the cool waters of the lake. I exulted in the thought of purification. I should come out fit to meet Janet!

"The surf was boiling beneath me, and the needle-points of the rocks showed above it. But my recklessness took no heed of danger. I sang wild snatches of a song—it was a silly thing—a remnant from some music-hall—sung the night before by a line of show-girls.

"I had stripped off my coat, and was untying my shoes when, suddenly borne on the wings of the wind, I heard an answering note.

"As I stood spellbound, I saw, far in the distance, a swaying light following the irregular line of the cliff. I called, and the answer rang out: 'I'm coming!' I plunged forward and fell at her feet.

"When I opened my eyes she bent above me. She wore her old gingham gown, and it was drenched and torn. Her hair was wind-blown. But her eyes—and the light in her hands—I can't think about it—I can't tell it. But I knew then what she meant to me—what she will always mean to me.

"It has been a year since then. What I am, I am by the grace of God, working through a wise and steadfast woman.

"There are people who will say that she married me for my money. But she knows and I know that we are foreordained mates. My need of her strength, and her need of my love—these are our reasons."

He stood up as he finished.

"My world, if I must lose it, will be well lost for her. It is for you to say——"

Before they could answer, there came the purr of an electric motor, and a big car loomed through the shadows. A footman jumped down and opened the door.

A woman ascended the steps, and stood for a moment under the lamp, a gracious figure in shining white, her dark hair banded with silver, a rose-red cloak half slipping from her shoulders.

As Mortimer stepped down to meet her, her hand went out to him. "Justin," she said, "am I very late for dinner, dear?"

They were on their feet in a moment, the men who had judged her, hats off, heels clicking, and as she smiled at them, with parted lips, they had a vision of her as her husband had seen her on that night of the storm—in her wet green gingham, with her light held high.

And it was Herrick, arbiter of social destinies, who was the first to speak.

"Wake up, old man," he said to Mortimer, who stood proud but uncertain beside her—"wake up and present us. We want to meet—your wife!"



IN EXILE

BY JAMES B. KENYON

BY myriad-trodden ways I go;
And yet my feet have known
Green banks where singing waters flow,
And musky scents are blown
From pastures where wild roses grow,
Past meadows newly mown.

Now deafening clamors stun my ear;
Yet I have heard the horn
Of questing bees wind sweet and clear
Above the tasselled corn,
And thrushes fluting far and near
Through all the golden morn.

Still in my heart old memories dwell;
Cool dawns and quiet eves;
Dim wooded paths, a sunlit dell,
Low whisperings of leaves;
Hushed noons that weave their breathless spell;
Swart arms that bind the sheaves.

So, while the thunderous tides pass by,
And granite cañons roar,
Somewhere I see a dappled sky
Arching forevermore
O'er smiling fields, a cottage nigh,
And doves about the door.

AN ANTIDOTE FOR ORDER

A SKETCH

By Elizabeth Maury Coombs

THE Road to Nowhere winds away between low, grassed hills, and always the mountains loom before you—turquoise, sapphire, or emerald, as the day is fair, cloud-shadowed, or after summer rain.

To-day, the leaves are falling, and each housekeeping tree has laid her Persian prayer-rugs on the floor of the old road, where lately only her own shadows lay. Before the wind had cleaned their carpets for them—and then wilfully whirled them away—my horse's feet found soft padding along the lane, so that I came quite unannounced upon an old man who hobbled along with a tiny paper bag in his hand. Plainly, he was just from the little country store that supplies our must-haves at Rabbit Run. I pulled in my horse a little way ahead, and, pointing to the empty seat of the runabout, said:

"Might you and I be going the same way?"

"We might," he answered, "but mine leads to the almshouse."

"Friend," I smiled, "perhaps mine also, for I am collecting magazine dejection slips."

"I'll just put my little poke here"—placing his small bag carefully as he scrambled up by my invitation—"and my wooden leg can ride outside"—with a wintry smile that time had not robbed of its childlike-ness. "It'll ride jest as nice out there." So on the step he propped it—that well-worn contraption of wood, with iron bands, and padded in wearing-spots with rags.

We held some converse of weather and crops, as is our country-neighbor way, and then, as we fell silent, he said:

"I be n't as feeble as some of us, Miss—only a touch of rhumatiz on dampish days. 'Times now, when the leaves ain't rustlin', I kin crope up an' git a squirrel in a mulberry tree, and," with a self-respectful air he further confided, "I ain't obliged to stay at the County Home. I've got a granddaughter as would take keer er me. But I'm happier here—I can whittle when I want."

"Then your granddaughter is a single woman?"

"No, 'm, not to say exactly; but sometimes them what's married

and ain't got no little fellers—seems like they's sometimes more singler than them whar's jest happened not to marry."

"I've seen them!"

"I went to live with her when Mother—that's my wife—died. Sarah, my granddaughter, had the name er bein' a powerful housekeeper. Everything had its place, and everything was in its place—'cep'n' me. Seems like there was n't no place that fitted me—or that I fitted, ruther. Seems like," he mused on, "er man is jest allers kinder litter, after his wife dies, don't it, Miss?"

And again, "Do *you* clean house often, Miss?"

"Well, no; only enough to allay public opinion."

"'Pears like you looked sorter that er way ter me when I fust laid eyes on you!"

I never had a compliment that pleased me more.

"Well—Sarah, she cleaned often, with a towel pinned over her head. Seems like they clean harder with a towel on their heads! And 'peared like my feet was allers in the very place she'd wanted ter sweep, and then when I'd git up ter go outen the door, I'd let in a fly—I'd be jest about sure to! Seems like that fly'd wait on that porch fer hours jest fer me ter be the one ter open the screen door fer him! Now," he reflected with an indulgent smile, "I ain't never had no great anxiety against a fly—no more had Mother. 'Pears like ter me that he be the harmlessest creetur Gord Almighty made. No bite ner sting has he! Sometimes when a feller gets lonesome a fly's right nice to be with, a sociable little body settin' right on yer knee an' a-cleanin' o' his wings with his little hind legs, an' a-rubbin' o' his little black hands tergether fer ter clean his own little face—an' a-doin' no nothin' ter nobody!"

He paused awhile and then back-tracked on his thought, as is the habit of age.

"So I moved along, an' I'm right happy. I brought my old white oak chair—with the patchwork cushion Mother made fer it that fust winter I had rhumatiz—an' it sets mighty comfortable by the fire. 'Times I sets by my fire and whittles jumpin' jinnys—you know them kind? Chilluns loves 'em, an' Mother she used ter say I made 'em that funny a parson would 'a' laughed. 'Times I seems to hear her laughin' yet; she was fat an' had a great big shaky laugh—an' war n't never no great hand at house-cleanin'.

"Yes'm, this is where I turn in, an' the road was most amazin' short this evenin'." Then, taking out his little bag, he looked at me so anxiously and queried:

"Miss, do you like sugar?"

As it happens, I do not, but, remembering my old grandfather's secretary, as we called his desk, and a certain pigeonthole wherein lay a

delectable oozy bag containing brown sugar, which made an appearance only on tooth-pulling occasions when unattended with tears, I said:

"If it's brown——"

"Brown it is, Miss!" he cried with his glad child smile. So in I dipped my fingers. He added as I left him:

"Now, was n't that lucky! I just had five cents, an' the white cost six a pound!"

Sometimes I wonder—as the Road to Nowhere in my mind leads along to where, far in front, the mountains of Truth loom turquoise, sapphire, and emerald battlemented against the horizon of the world—if maybe with the litter and the whittlings, we housekeepers—that in the largest sense are house-mothers—may not be sweeping out some human souls with the trash? If, possibly, we may not have kept out the little children—along with the mud on their shoes? If, in our eternal sweeping away of cobwebs, we may not unwittingly have swept away those fine filaments of love crossing from mother to child that by-and-by would have doubled and strengthened into the cable cords of love that would have held them to the home?



AN IDYL

BY CAROLYN WELLS

O H, as I came dancing through a grove,
 In Arcady, in Arcady,
 I fashioned me a lady love, in Arcady to-day.
 Her cheeks were made of the wild blush rose,
 And her eyes of the cornflower blue,
 Her hair of golden sunset glows,—
 And somehow, she looked like you!

I gave her a voice of the sighing breeze,
 And a laugh of the brooklet's purl;
 Her breath was the scent of cowslip leas,
 And her smile was a starlight swirl.
 I gave her a thousand other charms,
 And then,—my dream came true,—
 I clasped her close in my waiting arms,
 And somehow, she *was* you!

WHEN MA RODGERS BROKE LOOSE

By Hicks Bates Brodersen

It was a hot, smothery July morning. Heat waves shimmered above the thick white dust of the country road, and the sun broiled down upon the vegetable-patch beside it with fierce intensity.

As Ma Rodgers stood in the kitchen doorway, a huge tin pan in one hand and a sunbonnet in the other, she sighed a meek little sigh, for she was tired. She had been at work many hours already, and the prospect of gathering peas in that pitiless heat was not an inviting one. But the sigh was followed by a smile as she put on her sunbonnet and hurried down the path, saying to herself, "Oh, well, I ought to be glad I have any peas to gather."

Ma Rodgers had what might be termed an "Oh, well" disposition. If she wanted to go anywhere and was disappointed, she said to herself, "Oh, well, I had n't anything to wear," and if sometimes she wished she had a new dress, she said, "Oh, well, I don't go many places to wear it."

A unique epitaph found in a quaint graveyard ran thus: "She was so pleasant," and that is the best description that could be given of Ma Rodgers—she was so pleasant. She was pleasant when she came down in the morning, which is more than can be said of most people; she was pleasant all through a hard, worrying day, and she was pleasant when she went to bed at night, tired past all belief and aching in every joint.

She had made herself a slave to her husband and to her boy and girl, and, as is often the way with families, they had let her do it. They never noticed that she was wearing out, that she was always tired and always shabby. They were so used to her sacrifices that they actually never realized them. At least this much credit is due them.

The sun was still broiling down on the vegetable-patch, and the July morning was an hour older, when Eliza Bonner, carrying a large basket, came up the front path and scowled darkly at the picture of Susan Rodgers lolling in a hammock under a tree, reading a novel. Eliza had a sharp face, a spare frame, a shrewd mind, and a big, kind heart which she went to all sorts of trouble to conceal.

"Susan, where's your Ma?" she asked sourly.

"What je say? Oh, Ma! I dunno. I guess she's down in the garden."

"Humph!" quoth Eliza shortly, and passed around the side of the house. Just as she reached the back steps, Ma Rodgers came wavering up from the garden. She had pushed her bonnet back to get air; her face was purple, and perspiration streamed from every feature. The swollen veins on her forehead and neck throbbed visibly. She smiled bravely, and sank down in a little heap on the step in the shade of the arbor.

"My!" she panted, "it's hot, ain't it? But the peas are fine!"

Eliza shut her mouth into a straight line. She always hated interfering, but injustice made her so mad that the words just boiled up, and she had hard work to keep them from boiling over.

"My!" said Ma Rodgers, wiping her dripping face with her apron. "Seems 's if I'd never cool off."

Eliza's mouth opened.

"Why did n't you git Susan to help you?"

"Oh, well," said Ma Rodgers, "she's readin' a story, an' I hated to ast her."

"Why did n't Jim Rodgers or Joe pick 'em las' night, afore sun-down?"

"Why, you know, they like 'em right fresh picked, an' seems 's if they do taste better."

All of a sudden Eliza boiled over:

"The trouble with you is, you're too pleasant, Jane Rodgers, an' your family jest tromp over you. If your bein' pleasant done anybody any good, I would n't say a word, but it don't. It don't do you any good, that's certain, fer everybody jest natchurally puts on you because you ain't got gumption enough to object; an' it don't do them any good, fer they're turnin' into the laziest, selfishest lot o' lumps I ever set eyes on."

Ma Rodgers gasped out, "I've tried so hard to bring 'em up right."

"I know you've tried, but you ain't succeeded, because you ain't gone about it right. If you want folks to be o' some use in the world, don't wait on 'em hand an' foot. Make 'em wait on you.

"Look at that big loppos of a husband o' your'n! You on your knees, after a hard day's washin', takin' off his shoes an' puttin' on his slippers fer 'im. 'T ain't no wonder people use you fer a door-mat when you crawl right under their feet. An' look at 'im—he ain't got any more manners than a pig, all because you got 'im out o' the habit.

"Look at that fat son o' your'n settin' in front o' the fire, winter days, with his feet cocked up an' a book in his hand, yellin', 'Ma, the

fire needs attention,' an' never even lookin' up with a word o' thanks when you come staggerin' in with both arms full o' logs an' stirrin' up the fire to keep him warm.

"Look at that saucy snub of a daughter. Instead o' her hustlin' roun' to git breakfast fer you, she lays abed an' lets you bring 'er coffee an' rolls in the mornin', because she read about it in a book onct.

"An' what good 's it goin' to do 'em? They may be more comf'table now, but it can't keep on ferever, fer you're wearin' yourself out, an' when you die, nobody's goin' to do things fer 'em, fer nobody'll like 'em well enough. They're growin' too hateful an' selfish.

"I hope I ain't spoke too plain—but it's all Gawspel truth. What you want to do is to break loose some o' these days an' scare the wits out of 'em. Then maybe they'll sit up an' take notice."

Here she took a deep breath and rose stiffly.

"Well, I must be goin'. Good-by, Jane, an' don't let yourself git overhet like this again—if you kin help it."

Then she remembered why she had come, and, stooping, she took out of her basket an enormous pan filled with something redolent of cinnamon and brown sugar. This she carefully carried inside and placed on the table, saying as she came out, "I baked buns this morning, an' I wanted you should have some. I did n't take 'em out of the pan, because they're so gooey. You kin bring back the pan when you've a mind to." And primly she descended the steps and went her way.

Ma Rodgers sat stunned. She never even thanked Eliza for the buns. Her mind had no room for anything but what Eliza had said about Jim and the children. Was it true? Was she making them so nobody would like them? She had never thought of anything except that she loved them so dearly that she wanted to make everything easier for them. Eliza had said they were hateful and selfish. They were n't hateful, but then, of course, she never crossed them. Selfish! Now that she thought of it, they never *did* try to do anything for her—or for anybody.

She sat and thought and thought and tried to reason it out. If it had been just for her own comfort, she would never have bothered, but the thing that rankled was that she was doing them harm instead of good.

Finally, with a funny mixture of fright and resolution on her face, she got up and went around the side of the house.

"Susan," she said, with a little quaver in her voice, "I wish you'd help me shell the peas. I'm afraid dinner'll be late."

"Oh, Ma, I can't," Susan complained. "I'm just in the middle of this book."

Ma Rodgers went back to the kitchen-step and stood there.

Yes, there was no doubt of it: Susan was selfish; and nothing mild-

mannered would cure her of it. She had tried politeness, now she'd have to "break loose," as Eliza had told her.

Suddenly she whirled about, rushed around to the hammock, and snatched the book out of Susan's hand.

"Now," she said, before the astonished girl could get her breath, "you hike around there and shell them peas as fast as you kin shell. An', what's more, you don't git a peek in this book until you've done a day's work. After you've helped with the meals an' washed the dishes an' cleaned up, you kin think about readin'."

Ma Rodgers had hard work to retain the look of stern command throughout this long speech, for Susan looked so funny and got out of the hammock so fast that it was as much as Ma Rodgers could do to keep from looking astonished herself.

As Susan went out of sight, Ma Rodgers suddenly sat down in the hammock, more to keep herself from falling than anything else, for her knees had begun to give under her. Then she got to thinking it all over again, and, as she thought, she swung gently back and forth. It was very pleasant there, cool and shady, and a little breeze fanned her as she swung. Then she wondered how it would feel to lie down and swing. With a childish look of mischief and apprehension on her face, she let herself sink into the depths of the hammock, gave herself a last mighty push, and then tucked both feet in clear of the ground. Up she swung, down she swung; up again, down again. The air rushed past her, a little less each time, and delightfully cool and soothing. The birds sang and the insects hummed. The motion of the hammock had quieted to a little swaying, this way, that way. With a smothered chuckle, she remembered a game of childhood—she was "letting the old cat die." She wondered what people would say. She wondered what Susan——

The miracle had happened. Ma Rodgers was asleep in the hammock in the middle of the day.

Through a heavenly dream of rest and joy and wild freedom, a feeling of impending doom filtered. Blacker and more insistent it became. Restlessly she stirred, and finally opened her eyes on the awestruck face of Susan standing beside the hammock.

"I've shelled the peas, an' pared the potatoes, but I dunno what else to do, an' Pa an' Joe are just comin' over the hill."

Ma Rodgers flew up in a panic. Pa and Joe! And dinner could n't be on time, and they always fussed so if it was five minutes late. She scrambled out of the hammock and rushed back to the kitchen. Breathlessly she put on the water for the vegetables, and ran here and there, after the meat and milk and butter; and then in they came.

"Gee, I'm hungry," growled Joe. "Ain't dinner ready, Ma?"

Pa Rodgers walked over to the fire and grumbled, "Why don't ye put some wood in this fire? Looks to me 's if dinner won't be ready fer an hour."

A violent trembling fit took possession of Ma Rodgers, and her hand shook so that she dropped the butter-dish, butter and all; and then she "broke loose."

"No, and what's more, it won't ever be ready without 'n you two big lazy things git out there in the woodshed an' chop some wood. Do you think I'm goin' to work my fingers to the bone doin' two or three women's work an' then do men's work beside? Not much, I ain't! You git out there an' hustle in that wood. No wood, no dinner. Quick, now! Don't stand starin' like a couple o' calves."

With that, she flounced out of the room, skilfully dropping an apron over a little pile of wood she had chopped that morning.

Silently, in a dazed sort of way, the two men passed on out to the woodshed.

Ma Rodgers, watching through the crack of the door, rocked back and forth with suppressed laughter, their faces were so unutterably funny, and they walked along so meekly.

For a while, in the woodshed, there was no sound save that of chopping. Then Joe raised his head. "Say, Pa," he said, "what you reckon 's the matter with Ma?"

Pa shook his head gloomily. "Dunno. Never seen 'er in sech a tantrum." And then the chopping went on.

In the meanwhile, Ma Rodgers told Susan to set the table, and then she surreptitiously stuffed her own little pile of wood into the fire, and soon the dinner was merrily cooking. By the time Joe and his father entered with great armfuls of wood, everything was nearly done.

She glanced at the wood as they put it down, and said, "Well, you were so long about it, the fire started up of its own accord. Next time, see that the wood-box is filled before you leave in the morning." It pretty nearly killed her to say this, she was naturally so grateful for anything done for her, but she knew it would never do to back down so soon, if she expected any lasting benefit.

At the table, they all looked so subdued she could hardly keep her face straight. She looked at her plate to hide the mischievous look in her eyes, and then she said:

"Susan, I want you should learn to make cake. Two weeks from to-morrow is the church picnic. I'm agoin', so we'll need two cakes. I'll make one, an' you kin make the other."

Three mouths hung wide open in amazement. For years, Ma Rodgers had made the good things for the rest of them to take to the picnic, but she had always stayed home. She had always said she had nothing to wear.

Susan and Joe gasped out, "You goin' to the picnic!"

And Pa Rodgers said, "Why, Ma, you ain't got nothin' to wear."

Ma Rodgers snapped out, "I said I was goin' to the picnic, an' I meant I was goin' to the picnic. As fer havin' nothin' to wear, Jim Rodgers, it's about time I did have somethin' to wear, an' you kin have till to-morrow to git me ten dollars to buy somethin' with, an' then I'll have two weeks to make it in. Jest because I've been a fool an' a fright all my life ain't any reason why I should always be a fool an' a fright. Now, then! An' fer goodness' sake, shet your mouths. You look like I dunno what, that way."

For two weeks the dazed look never left the faces of Pa Rodgers and Joe and Susan. They were at the beck and call of Ma Rodgers, who scolded and complained and commanded. Everything went like clockwork, and Ma Rodgers grew less and less tired, and sewed secretly on her new clothes with a feeling of lawlessness and wild abandon. The only thing that troubled her was a sensation of distress at the thought of how the others must feel, and what they must think of her.

The day of the picnic arrived. With Susan's help, the hampers had been packed with a delicious lunch, and Ma Rodgers had gone upstairs to dress. Somehow, she could not get rid of the feeling that the rest of the family would not enjoy the picnic—they seemed so depressed and meek and quiet. However, when she finally put on her new dress, she forgot everything else in the elation of that moment. The dress was a soft, gray dimity, and Ma Rodgers, who was a born dressmaker, although she had hitherto used her art only to beautify Susan, had made it with skilful hands and had lightened it up with the tiniest, deftest touches of pale old rose. Her hair, which for years she had worn strained back into a tight little knot because it took less time from her work, she had brushed and brushed until it glinted with silver lights, and had then combed it loosely and heaped it rather high on her head. Then she donned a silver gray toque with a few crushed roses of pale old-rose color at the side, and the effect was such that she pinched herself to see if she was awake. Her cheeks were brilliant, and her eyes were surely never that blue!

With her gray silk gloves swinging in one hand, she almost ran downstairs, and from the hall she could see Jim Rodgers sitting by the kitchen window. She stopped and caught her breath, and then she raised her head high and entered the room with an air such as she always thought she would have if she ever had the clothes to bear it out.

Jim looked up, and his paper went fluttering to the floor. For two weeks he had looked astonished, but now he looked transfixed. Then slowly he rose from his chair, never taking his eyes from her.

"Why, Janie!" he said softly, breathlessly. "Why, Janie!"

The color came and went in Ma Rodgers' face, and her lips trembled.

"Well, Jim," she said, "how do I look?"

Jim reached out both hands and took her gently by the shoulders.

"You look," he said wonderingly, "like a peach-blossom in the sun."

Ma Rodgers swallowed hard several times, and then she gave a little giggle.

"My!" she said. "I do hope I ain't agoin' to mess myself all up cryin', but seems 's if I do feel terrible queer. There's somethin' I've got to git off my mind before this picnic. Here come the children, an' I'll tell you all to onct."

Without giving them time to express their astonishment at her appearance, she started right in to tell them how somebody had opened her eyes to what she was doing to them, and how she had resolved to change things. Ever since, she had been scolding and ordering until she herself was in danger of becoming a tyrant, so she thought it was time to talk things over, and come to some sort of an agreement whereby they all might help one another and all be happy and pleasant.

"Seems 's if I just could n't go to this picnic with you all thinkin' me so disagreeable," she added.

They all looked at one another, and then they started to laugh.

"Oh, Ma," said Susan, "I'm so glad an' so relieved, an' I'll just love to help you now."

"Me too," laughed Joe.

"Yes," said Pa Rodgers; "we all will. It's jest that we did n't think, Janie, an' you did n't give us a chance."

"Well," said Ma Rodgers, "you'll git all the chance you want now. Nobody'll ever say again that I spoil you. Now, who's goin' to the picnic?"

Chattering and laughing, they scrambled joyfully into the carriage, and off they went.

It was one of those soft, breezy, ideal days which belong in early June, but which come at rare times in July; after a storm, when all the world looks new and the air is fresh and sweet.

Ma Rodgers sat beside Susan on the back seat, and as she looked at the beautiful country and breathed in the restfulness of it all and felt the happiness of those around her, it seemed as if she could hardly bear the joy of it. She glanced at Susan and found her staring at her with a strange, intense expression.

"My land, Susan!" exclaimed Ma Rodgers. "What are you lookin' at?"

"I'm lookin' at you," said Susan shyly. "You're prettier'n anythin' I ever saw."

Tears rose to Ma Rodgers's eyes, and she grasped Susan's hand tightly in her own, realizing a companionship which had never been possible before.

And so they sat until they arrived at the picnic grounds, when the first person to pass their way was Eliza Bonner. Pa Rodgers and Susan and Joe were on their way to greet some friends, and Ma Rodgers had stopped to tuck a snowy napkin a little more securely over a well filled hamper in the back of the carriage.

Eliza nodded sourly to the three, and said to Susan:

"How's your Ma?"

"Why, there she is. You kin ask her yourself."

Eliza looked at the figure in gray and flushed darkly, thinking that Susan was joking.

Then Ma Rodgers turned around. Eliza gasped.

"Jane Rodgers!" she stuttered. "'Tain't never in the world you!"

"Yes, 't is, Eliza. I broke loose, like you told me to. Come on somewheres, an' I'll tell you all about it."



HALF THE WORLD BETWEEN US

BY MARY COLES CARRINGTON

LOVE, perchance, comes drifting like a crimson butterfly.
(Half the world between us, but my heart is still the same!)
 Lightly touching eager lips, his beauty flutters by.
(League on league between us, and my heart is all aflame!)

Love, to others, passes like a bee upon the wing.
(Half the world between us, but my heart is all your own!)
 Honey-sweet his burden, but he leaves a bitter sting.
(Ocean rolls between us, and I'm wearying alone!)

Love to me came flying like a bird that seeks its nest.
(Half the world between my heart and our old trysting-place!)
 Wings serenely folded now, his home is in my breast.
(But, oh, sweetheart, across the world I'm longing for your face!)

THE GOL-DARNED COW

By Rose Lombard

OLIVER despised the cow—there was no doubt about that. He loathed her with a deep-seated hatred that could never be satisfied this side of the grave, his own or the cow's—he had reached the point where he did not much care which.

When his father wrote him in February that he had bought a five-hundred-acre peach orchard in Georgia, Oliver sank a little deeper into his Sleepy Hollow chair, shifted his elevated legs a bit on the mantel, puffed deep on his meerschaum, and let his Latin grammar fall to the floor, while he drew pleasing mental pictures of life on the Georgia plantation. His practical father had said "farm"—a Yankee slip; they were always plantations in the South.

His visions of the place loomed rosily through the gray smoke of his pipe: a stately house with a cool, white-pillared veranda, and a couple of blooded riding-horses tied at the end of the path; some pretty, dark-haired girls, gowned in fluffy white, who dropped their *g*'s and talked in soft, sweet voices; and picturesque negro servants bobbing obsequiously in and out, probably handing mint-juleps. He did n't know what a mint-julep was, but he was willing to find out.

Altogether, Oliver was very much pleased with his father's letter. He remembered his Latin with deep regret, rose and stretched himself, and yawned.

Oliver was built like a pair of tongs. He was a perfectly normal-looking person from the top of his head to his waist, but from there down the length of limb was astonishing. He was only seventeen, and six feet tall—mostly legs.

Crossing the campus an hour later, he caught sight of the director of athletics, and quickened his steps to overtake him. It was a great pity he did so. The little god of chance was laughing at him at that moment. If he could have heard the chuckle, he might have saved himself great humiliation later; but the little god laughed softly, and Oliver plunged ahead.

He never missed a chance to put himself in the way of notice from the Professor. The height of Oliver's ambition was to win glory on the athletic field. He did not insist upon being a foot-ball hero. He was

willing to be the idol of the track-team, or anything else the Professor picked out for him, if he ever got over this cold-blooded indifference.

So far he had never drawn a spark of notice from the great man, but had had the mortifying experience of having to introduce himself as Heywood, of Oshkosh, whenever he secured a moment of his attention.

This afternoon the Professor almost remembered him.

"Let me see—you're from Oshkosh, I believe?"

Oliver flushed. He was sick of being from Oshkosh, any way, and a vision of the Southern plantation flashed into his mind. He followed an irresistible impulse.

"We usually spend the winters north," he said, with elaborate carelessness, "but we always go to the old Georgia plantation in the summer-time."

Professor Grayson was immediately interested.

"You don't say!" he exclaimed, and the pinch of geniality in his tone increased tremendously. "So you are really from the South? What part of Georgia did you say?"

"Our place is near Mount Yonah," gulped Oliver.

"I have never been south myself," pursued the Professor. "So your home is one of the old Georgia plantations?"

Oliver hesitated. The stately white-pillared mansion, set in its spacious park, flashed into his mind again. Here was his chance to get a little friendly notice from the Most Important Man, merely by describing the ancient home of his childhood. There was n't a bit of sense in letting a little thing like the fact that he had not yet seen the place stand in the way of his great opportunity.

So the little god of chance giggled in his sleeve, while Oliver launched into a description of Magnolia Hall. He had not meant to name the place. In fact, he hated to be obliged to do so. He went most reluctantly into details about the thoroughbreds in the stables, and the amount of cotton and peaches they shipped yearly.

It had not occurred to him that the matter could get so involved, and the farther he went the unhappier he grew. He had no intention of bringing in Pompey the butler, nor Aunt Charity, the cook who was almost a hundred years old; but the insatiable Professor drew him out inexorably, and so long as he had been driven to invent Pompey and Aunt Charity at all, why, hang it, he might as well finish them up to the Professor's taste!

They took a long walk together, and the Professor asked questions about the sunny South, and by grace of a well-spurred imagination that was rapidly growing feverish, the unhappy Freshman supplied the answers.

When they parted, the Professor shook hands warmly.

"Heywood," he said, "I am going to tell you a secret. I am coming

down to Atlanta next summer to marry the finest girl in all your South, and I shall certainly look you up."

Oliver's heart gave an uncomfortable flop. He wished he had not gone so far as to name the place, and he determined fiercely that if there was a magnolia anywhere about the grounds, it was to be rechristened Magnolia Hall as soon as he got there. He went over desperately in his mind the other details he had given, speculating gloomily on the probability of being able to produce Pompey, who stuttered. Aunt Charity, thank goodness, was old enough to die off in the next few months.

Oliver would have slept better that night if he had known that the Professor was the most absent-minded man in the world. He had forgotten the name of Magnolia Hall before dinner. In a week's time he had forgotten all about the plantation, and he had almost forgotten Oliver, until, seeing him cross the campus one morning, he recalled the walk and scribbled his name in an address-book.

The Georgia plantation was a great shock to Oliver. The shock came to him in sections. The first instalment met him at the train.

Mount Yonah is a beautiful spot. An imposing-looking summer hotel opposite the station made the first glimpse from the car-window eminently satisfactory and heartening. Black servants moved about on the big, white-columned veranda, and a group of white-capped, white-aproned mammies held fairy-like children by the hand to watch the train come in.

When he stepped on to the platform and scanned the landscape for the pair of thoroughbreds that were to drive him out home, Oliver was disappointed. An ox-team was creaking down the road with a load of cord-wood. A rickety buggy, with a fagged-looking livery horse, had a drummer's sample-trunk strapped on behind, and across the road a man in blue overalls was tying an ancient nag to a post. The horse was hitched to a shiny new green wagon, loaded with shingles. The man in the overalls was Oliver's father.

"I've bought a buggy, too, Son," he explained, as they clambered over the wheel; "but I needed this load of shingles, so I just drove in with the wagon."

Oliver swallowed hard. He looked dismally at the bony, plodding steed, and vague apprehension congealed into horrible conviction. He had made a terrible mistake.

During the long drive home, he learned amazing things. It appeared that peach orchards flourished not only in the palmetto-groved atmosphere of his dreams, but also in the rough, thinly-settled mountain regions of the State. When a desire to possess baronial acres seized his father, the price of land in the highlands determined the location of the Heywood family-seat.

His father and his mother were camping out, in next-to-nature

fashion, in a stuffy, unpainted little tenant-house, with a five-foot porch. Up north they would have called it a shack. His father waxed enthusiastic over the novelty and primitiveness of it all, but it merely bored Oliver. Perhaps the hardest blow of all was the discovery that Pompey the butler, Aunt Charity the cook, and the half-dozen other retainers of Magnolia Hall were all boiled down into one hatchet-faced white woman, Mandy, who helped his mother with the cooking. Mandy had never even heard of a mint-julep.

After a few weeks, some pretty, dark-haired girls appeared on the scene. Barefoot and ragged, they hoed cotton in the rows between the peach trees. They dropped their *g's*. They also affixed an *h* superfluously, and inquired politely:

"Hit sure is a hot day, hain't it, mister? Be you-all aimin' to stay long in these parts?"

Oliver was not aiming to stay a minute longer than he could help. He was already in correspondence with his college about the summer term. He wrote that letter the day he took charge of the cow.

Mandy had an attack of rheumatism in her fingers, and had to give up milking. Mandy's husband, who worked in the orchard, indignantly refused to do "wimmin-folk's work."

That narrowed it down to Oliver and his father and mother.

By an unlucky chance, he had let it out in one of his tales of college pranks that he had once milked a professor's cow at midnight.

That narrowed it down to Oliver.

Mandy and the family accompanied him to the barn to watch the milking.

To Oliver's chagrin, the cow would have nothing to do with him. She jerked impatiently away every time he touched her. He "so-bossed" her in every tone of voice he could muster, from a gentle persuasive caress to a vociferous demand. He finally backed her into a corner, where she could not get away, but the cow had a trick up her sleeve, so to speak, on which he had not counted. After twenty minutes' earnest manipulation on his part, the Jersey that was due to deliver two gallons had furnished less than a pint of milk.

Mandy stood in the doorway of the barn and studied the matter with the unruffled calm of superior intelligence.

"I know what's the matter of her! She hain't never been used to a man about her, noways, and hit upsets her powerful. Ol' man Rucker had jest sich a to-do onct, when Mis' Rucker was laid up and he had to milk. But he fixed her. He put on Mis' Rucker's sunbunnet and apern, and the cow was all right. She never knowed nary diff'ence betwixt 'em, when the ol' man put on Mis' Rucker's things!"

Oliver rebelled.

By this time he had completely lost what little relish he had ever

had for the undertaking, and as for donning Mandy's apron and sun-bonnet, and knuckling under to cater to the absurd whims of a cantankerous cow—the notion was not to be entertained for a moment!

Unfortunately, however, Oliver's father thought the hand-maiden's suggestion a perfectly reasonable one.

A few minutes later, when Oliver approached the cow, with Mandy's bonnet tied under his chin, and Mandy's blue-checked apron fastened high around his waist, he laid hands on a quiet, docile animal. The milk flowed streaming into the bucket, and so far as the cow was concerned, peace was restored.

But Oliver had conceived an incurable aversion for everything pertaining to cows. Peaches and cream and fried chicken had been the one bright spot in the simple life for him so far. After he took to milking, he could n't touch cream.

Mandy's attack of rheumatism held on until the embittered substitute began to suspect perfidy. He did everything he could think of to get out of the hated job. He upset the bucket, and then disgustedly watched Mandy strain out the few drops that remained. She did not even look surprised. Accidents occasionally happened when you milked.

He tried punching the cow, and the cow put her foot into the bucket and splashed him with milk from head to foot. He kicked her, and she kicked back, and she made the more successful kick.

The cow went through all the mental and moral stages of a misunderstood animal—surprised cow, indignant cow, exasperated cow, and finally developed into a mean, vindictive cow, with a deep-laid scheme for vengeance. The hatred that existed between Oliver and the cow was a terrible thing, from the viewpoint of those who believe that thoughts are things, and that wicked thoughts let loose, unbridled, work positive harm in the world.

One afternoon in July, the New York train rumbled through Mount Yonah and came to an abrupt stop a few miles beyond. The conductor walked through the train, explaining that there was a wrecked peach-car ahead, and that it would take hours for the wrecking crew to come up from Atlanta and clear the single track. They would probably have to spend the night at Mount Yonah.

Professor Grayson felt tremendously annoyed. He was on his way to visit his fiancée, and to be halted like this, within a few hours of Atlanta, was irritating. He stepped off the train. The name of the station stared in his face.

"Mount Yonah? Mount Yonah? I wonder why that name should be familiar?"

He ran through the leaves of a note-book:

Oliver Heywood, Mount Yonah, Georgia. Father grows peaches.
Promised to look him up on my trip south.

"By Jove! that's that modest young Freshman who blushed like a girl. I believe I will drive out there."

It was a beautiful afternoon. The view of the Blue Ridge was glorious, and the Professor enjoyed the drive.

It had been a particularly hateful day for Oliver. The front porch roof was being reshingled, and the local carpenter had gathered up his tools at noon, with two rows of shingles still missing. He explained that his cotton needed hoeing. He "allowed" that, having helped neighbor Heywood out this far, he ought to be able to finish it himself, especially with a great husky son loafing about, doing nothing.

Argument and bribery availed nothing. The mountaineer went home to his cotton; the notion had been put in his father's head, and Oliver, clothed in overalls and a huge disgust, climbed the ladder and began to nail on shingles.

He had to make frequent trips up and down. He was hot and tired, and in a state of mind bordering on desperation. Mandy had let the chickens loose, and they were underfoot everywhere. There was one particularly aggravating pullet that started up in a state of distracted fright, clattering and cackling, from under everything Oliver touched.

He had just come down from the roof and was impatiently wiping his sunburned face, when the silly young hen flew, screaming and fluttering, across his path again. He made a lunge at her.

Oliver did not know it, but all the disappointment and chagrin that had been accumulating in him since he first caught sight of his father in overalls were concentrated in that exasperated grab in the air.

He never could tell exactly what happened next. He tripped and fell, and when he struggled to his feet again he was gazing, petrified, at the bloody head of a chicken clutched firmly in his hand, while a frantic decapitated fowl dashed madly around the corner.

It was at this moment that the Professor arrived. Oliver heard the sound of wheels. He was still dazed from his fall and the horror of his unexpected rôle of executioner. The work on the hot roof had made him dizzy and ill; the chicken nauseated him; the Professor finished him. He sank to the ground in a dead faint. Over his ensanguined body a solicitous mother and a flabbergasted father introduced themselves to an astonished guest.

Now, Mandy had a practical nose, that could scent company from afar, and Mandy's disposition was a bit phlegmatic. Thus it was that the simultaneous phenomena of the rattle of wheels in the front yard, and the precipitate appearance of a headless chicken staggering drunkenly past the kitchen door, caused no ripple of surprise in her bosom. She sized up the situation with a quick-wittedness that forever gave the lie to any suspicion of dullness that one might entertain in looking Mandy over.

She seized the expiring fowl firmly by the legs, dipped it into the

bubbling hot water in the big iron wash-kettle that stood over a fire of chips, and then sat down to pluck the pullet. In this way it came about that the *pièce de résistance* of the Professor's supper was well on its way to the frying-pan before the Professor had fairly set foot on the ground.

The rôle of semi-invalid helped Oliver get through the evening. The Professor had really charming manners, and by bed-time he was treating Oliver with the much-coveted kindly familiarity of long acquaintance; but the conscience-tortured Freshman lay awake long, wondering how much the Professor recalled of his description of Magnolia Hall.

It rained in the night, and morning dawned wet and slushy. Oliver rose early and donned his detested milking *toilette*, and sat just inside the doorway of the barn, milking. There was a rope around the cow's horns, and he had wound the other end carelessly about his waist.

His antipathy for the cow had reached high-water mark, and he was feeling particularly aggrieved and indignant. So was the cow. He ought to have untied her bundle of fodder for her, and she knew it, but he had not, and she shook it impatiently. Then she switched her tail into his face.

This was a form of insult that was growing to be habitual with her. He gave her one vicious dig in the ribs, and the cow started. Out of doors, up the path, and into the orchard they went. Oliver did not want to go with her. He would have been perfectly delighted to see her go alone, but one end of the rope was attached to the cow, and he was attached to the other end of the rope.

He had always supposed that a cow ambled, but this fiendish thing went like a race-horse. Through the newly-plowed orchard, ankle deep in the red clay mud, she flew, and the unwilling Freshman followed.

She turned, and they came down the road together. She had struck her best gait by this time, and as they passed the house he had a glimpse of his father and the Professor on the porch. He did not call for help. Not that it was against his sporting ethics to do so, but he had other use for his breath.

Oliver and the cow disappeared around a bend of the road together, a flash of enraged beast, whirlwind legs, and blue gingham apron; and when he finally succeeded in cutting the rope, he fell with a jerk. The cow kept right on. They never did find the cow. She hated Oliver as much as he despised her, you remember.

He was muddy and lame and very tired, and approached the house nursing one ardent hope—that he might be able to sneak in, unseen, at the kitchen door. His father and the Professor were waiting for him out in front. They shouted and gesticulated. He was too tired to care.

The Professor hastened down the road to meet the humiliated son of the house. He plunged through the mud, both hands outstretched.

"Heywood," he cried as he wrung the astonished boy's hand, "when you get back to college this fall, you must go into the track-team! Do you hear? I have been measuring the distance between your foot-prints in the mud, and I simply can't believe my eyes! Man, your strides are ten feet apart! Do you realize what that means? Ten feet, I tell you! Upon my soul, one of these days you are going to break a world's record!"



THE JEW IN AMERICA

BY FELIX N. GERSON

WING thee, my song, and in majestic flight
 Grace with fair melody the words I write;
 That they, in some not too unworthy strain,
 With pride and plaint, of glory tell and pain;
 Say in what early dawn of history
 High fate enmeshed our footsteps—made us be
 The burdened bearers of a word sublime—
 The portent and the amulet of time.

For that far vale, the cradle and the grave,—
 Where we beheld God and the world He gave,—
 We have come hither for that high word's sake,
 Bound each to each with bonds that naught could break.

The golden thread along the paths we trod
 Gleamed bright from daily contact with our God—
 Through labyrinthine gloom of age on age
 We knew its radiance as our heritage,—
 And though in strange, far lands enforced to roam,
 The broad earth held for us no alien home.

Spain saw us—Holland—and th' intrepid crew
 Of the famed caravel whose captain knew
 Where sky and ocean melted in the west
 A new world waited for his wondrous quest.

A new world—with great portals far outflung—
 Holding a hope more sweet than time had sung,
 To which the Jew, of life's high quest a part,
 A pilgrim came, the Torah in his heart.
 Of his endeavor, how he thrived and came
 To give new glory to his ancient name
 And wore as diadem the thread of gold,
 On many a page the chronicler has told.

A land of promise, and fulfilment too;
Where on a sudden olden dreams came true.
Man was man's equal—unto every race
The path was levelled to the highest place.
Here grew we part of an ennobled state,
Gave and won honor, sat among the great,
And saw unfolding to our 'raptured view
The day long prayed for by the patient Jew.

Pause thou, my song, that soarest proud and high,
Pause thou awhile, lest some far-echoed cry
Reverberating through the caves of time
Destroy the structure of thy vaulting rhyme.
A pale cadaver with lack-lustre eyes,
Touches the harp and stills its melodies.

Russia, thy name embitters history,
And in the ages that are yet to be,
A symbol thou for all the world holds worst—
Abhorred of heaven, by mankind accursed.
Prophetic made by frenzy of our grief,
By miseries that mount beyond belief,
We thee consign to be the scorn of time,
Shackled forever to earth's blackest crime.
The long forefinger of the future years
Shall point thee out the fountain-head of tears;
Nor ocean's waters may efface the stain
Branded in blood on thee—the brand of Cain!

Fain turns my song unto some fairer note—
We guard a promise voiced in days remote,
The words of prophets, and our deathless hope,
That in dark hours when we despairing grope
In ever clearer accents shall be heard:
No tyrant's perfidy may kill God's word.

Still trembling, in the valley, in the gloom,
About us frowning rocks strange shapes assume;
But unto faith that fears nor wreck nor storm
There dawns a golden day that shall transform
These spectres of a long and cruel night
To ministering friends in new-born light,
When tried by travail and by fire and rod
We shall emerge, unchanged, to face our God.

SHORT-STORY MASTERPIECES

SECOND SERIES—RUSSIAN

X. THE CLOAK

By Nikolai Vassilievich Gogol

DONE INTO ENGLISH BY JOHN COUNOS, AND WITH
INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

GOGOL, THE FIRST RUSSIAN REALIST

PROFESSOR WILLIAM LYON PHELPS has noted that the year 1809 gave many notable men to literature, among them Darwin, Tennyson, Poe, Lincoln, Gladstone, Holmes, and Gogol. In this period of expanding ideas the Russian genius was born, March 19 (March 31), of a small land-owner's family, at the town of Sorotchintzi, government of Poltava, in the land of the Cossacks—Little Russia, or the Ukraine.

When the lad of twelve was sent to school at Niéjine, a town near Kiev, he found that the pupils prided themselves upon having their own college journal. In this he was to publish an early novel, "The Brothers Tviérdislavitchy," and later a tragedy, "The Robbers." He also contributed certain satires and ballads—all equally sophomoric. Certainly in these beginnings there were no deep marks of genius. To record that Gogol was a poor student is to bring to mind amusingly the number of great littérateurs who were either dismissed from college or showed no genius for application. I have often wondered how, in the face of such alluring evidence, professors of literature succeed in convincing ambitious young quill-drivers that their better course would be conscientious devotion to the curriculum. At all events, Gogol really derived more benefit from the training he secured while writing for the school theatre than from his mathematical and linguistic studies.

Upon leaving college, in 1828, the young enthusiast—romantic, dreaming of great deeds for his country, and taking himself much too seriously—went to the inevitable St. Petersburg, thinking that he could easily secure employment there. But he was disillusionized, for his talent excited no interest whatever. So, taking some hardly-saved money which his mother had sent him for another purpose, he embarked for foreign parts—some say for America. But his heart failed him, and he got no farther than Lübeck, where he left the boat, and, after three days'

wandering about the city, returned to St. Petersburg and secured employment as a copying clerk in the Ministry of Domain. Let us not forget this experience as we read "The Cloak."

In this billet he remained for a year, chafing under the grinding routine whose pressure at length compelled him to resign. He took up acting next, but his voice was not considered to be strong enough, and he then became a tutor in the families of the nobility in the Russian capital. Eventually he was appointed to a professorship of history in the University. His opening address was altogether brilliant, but, never a thorough student, he soon sounded the depths of his knowledge, and his students complained that he put to them to sleep. That ended his teaching.

All these successive failures—for such they really were—drove him to the one means of self-expression: literature. He now published a few modest essays in the leading journals. These attracted some attention and brought about his introduction to Pushkin, who received him warmly, and advised him to write of the land and people that he knew so well. This wise counsel resulted in a collection of brilliant fictional sketches entitled "Evenings at a Farm Near Dikanka" (1828-1831).

The most important of these is probably "St. John's Eve." It is instinct with the superstitious beliefs of his native province. The story is soon told, how that a young man, finely favored of body, falls in love with the daughter of his farmer-employer. His attentions having been discovered, he is flatly dismissed, whereupon a certain Mephistophelian character who has been doing trixy things about the village offers to procure for the youth a plentiful supply of gold wherewith to win the favor of the girl's father. This leads to a night meeting with a witch, accompanied with all the traditional manifestations. Under an incantation, the young man digs, finds a coffer, and is about to take out the gold, when the witch admonishes him that he first must perform a duty—thrust a knife into a large bag which stands before him. He refuses, and tears open the bag, when to his horror the form of his sweetheart's little brother is disclosed. The demon-man pictures all that the youth is about to lose by his unwillingness to murder the child; and, thus tempted, he plunges in the knife.

Thereafter all things go according to promise—he has plenty of gold, wins the favor of the father, and marries the girl, but he can never get over his settled melancholy as he thinks upon his terrible deed. Eventually—quite in the manner of all the tales which involve the sale of the soul to the devil—he disappears and goes to his Master.

The whole story is told with a remarkable handling of the weird. Perhaps no tale of witchcraft was ever more vividly and brilliantly handled—it is typical, both in matter and manner, of the Ukraine.

And this leads me to say that those writers are most interesting who

are the most distinctly national, and by "national" I mean those who temperamentally exhibit the typical characteristics of their land, who glory in its peculiar traits, and who in their writings picture and interpret its spirit.

Little Russia is neither north nor south, but, for reasons which the scientists may explain, displays quite marvelously the elements of both north and south in the two great seasons of the year. The few short summer months are saturated with flaring sunshine, causing the fields fairly to leap toward the farmer, full-handed with harvests. In these halcyon days the people revel in the miraculous transformation of nature, but when winter comes, the land of the Dniepr feels the sweep of icy northern winds quite as bitterly as do the dwellers on the Neva.

The population, too, is just as antipodal—in fact, it is really complex. Little Russia was at one time dominated by the Turks, who left many of their oriental traits among the people they had conquered; later, the Ukraine was subdued by Poland, which "transmitted something of its savage luxury to its vassals"; then Tartar hordes constantly swept across its borders and kept alive the joy of savage warfare; finally the Cossack leagues established themselves in the Ukraine and set up a wild chivalry upon whose picturesque exploits the Little Russian has ever since dwelt with prideful interest.

Gogol was born with a full measure of the Cossack spirit, descended, as he was, directly from this stock. His native Poltava is the very heart of the Cossack country, and Gogol's grandfather, who was his first teacher, infused the young spirit with all the imagery and fanciful extravagance of Cossack folk-lore. His mother, too, of whom he speaks most tenderly in his "Confessions of an Author," poured into his ears the legends of her land.

This primal literary equipment was bestowed upon a temperament that never ceased to be mystical, religious, and at the last melancholy—traits that are characteristic of almost every great Russian writer.

Gogol was also a humorist, but from the strangest reason, a reason which, unhappily, several other humorists shared with him: he wrote grotesque and laughter-provoking conceits to keep his mind from brooding on dark and depressing visions. Perhaps it may have been bodily weakness—for Gogol was small, weazened, unlovely to look upon, and often ill—or perhaps the results of an intensely religious nature turned in upon itself, but some cause constantly evoked in him the wildest hallucinations. Once while suffering the extremes of chilling penury in St. Petersburg, he contemplated suicide. He saw Death, and thus writes of the vision to his mother:

Mother, dearest mother, I know you are my truest friend. Believe me, even now, though I have shaken off something of the dread, even now, at the bare recollection of it, an indescribable agony comes over my

soul. It is only to you that I can speak of it. You know that I was in my boyhood endowed with a courage beyond my years. Who, then, could have expected I should prove so weak? But I saw her—no, I cannot name her—she is too majestic, too awful for any mortal, not only for me, to name. That face, whose brilliant glory in one moment burns into the heart; those eyes that quickly pierce the inner soul; that consuming, all-penetrating gaze; these are the traits of none that is born of woman. Oh, if you only had seen me in that moment! True, I could hide myself from all, but how hide myself from myself? The pains of hell, with every possible torture, filled my breast. Oh, what a cruel condition! I think, whatever the hell prepared for sinners may be, its tortures cannot equal mine. No, that was not love. At least, I never heard of love like that. . . . And then, my heart softened; I recognized the inscrutable finger of Providence that ever watches over us, and I blessed Him, who thus marvelously had pointed out the path wherein I should walk. No; this being whom He sent to rob me of quiet, and to topple down my frail plans, was no woman. . . . But I pray you, do not ask me who she is? She is too majestic, too awful to be named.

A later series of short-stories and sketches appeared from 1831 to 1833 under the title of "Mirgorod."

The first part of this collection constitutes one of the great romances of history—"Taras Bulba." It is long enough to be a short novel, and, indeed, it is a novel in plot. Briefly, it tells the story of a mighty Cossack colonel, whose name gives the work its title. The romance opens with his two sons, Ostap and Andrii, coming home from school and meeting their Homeric old father and gentle, homely, and adoring mother. The father cannot be convinced that his boys have not been injured by their course at school until he engages in violent fisticuffs with Ostap. Almost immediately, to the heart-breaking of the old lady, who plays a small part in the whole scheme of her husband's life, Taras Bulba personally takes his boys away to the great Cossack camp, where these corsairs of the steppes are gathered waiting for some chance of foray, or a war that may promise them spoils. The revelling scenes of the camp are pictured with tremendous verve, and the doughty, fear-despising, Jew-abusing Cossack is pictured to the life.

At length, a cause of war against the Tartars is cooked up and their city besieged. One night, Andrii, the younger son of Taras Bulba, is awakened by the gliding of a woman's figure near his sleeping quarters. She proves to be the servant of a beautiful Tartar maiden, the daughter of the Governor of the beleaguered city, who with all the other inhabitants is dying of starvation. Andrii gathers some provisions and follows the old woman by a secret underground passage into the city, where he meets the young beauty, who had previously enchanted him with a single glance while he was on the march from his home to the Cossack camp. For the sake of her love he renounces his own people and fights tremendously against them in the subsequent battle. During the *mêlée* he

meets his father, who slays him with a single blow and scarcely regrets the death of his traitorous son. Ostap is captured and carried away to a distant city. Knowing that his son is to be executed with torture, old Taras Bulba arises from his bed of many wounds and, after a long journey, makes his way to the foot of the scaffold in the public square. The boy suffers terribly, but is brave to the end.

But when they took him to the last deadly tortures, it seemed as though his strength were failing. He turned his eyes about.

Oh, God! all strangers, all unknown faces! If only some of his relatives were present at his death! He would not have cared to hear the sobs and anguish of his feeble mother, or the unreasoning cries of a wife, tearing her hair and beating her white breast: he would have liked to see the strong man who could refresh him with a wise word, and cheer his end. And his strength failed him, and he cried in the weakness of his soul, "Father, where are you? Do you hear all?"

"I hear!" rang through the universal silence, and all that million of people shuddered in concert.

Force is its prime quality—physical, mental, religious. "In this story," writes Professor Phelps, "the old Cossacks, centuries dead, have a genuine resurrection of the body. They appear before us in all their amazing vitality, their love of fighting, of eating and drinking, their intense patriotism, and their blazing devotion to their religious faith. Never was a book more plainly inspired by passion for race and native land. It is one tremendous shout of joy"—which even tragedy cannot silence.

Gogol was a stylist of no mean order, as "Taras Bulba" well demonstrates. It is full of Homeric passages, whose pungent vigor even survives translation. And for sheer beauty what can surpass this, the opening passage of "Night in May"?

Do you know the beauty of the nights of Ukraine? The moon looks down from the deep, immeasurable vault, which is filled to overflowing and palpitating with its pure radiance. The earth is silver; the air is deliciously cool, yet almost oppressive with perfume. Divine, enchanting night! The great forest trees, black, solemn, and still, reposing as if oppressed with thought, throw out their gigantic shadows. How silent are the ponds! Their dark waters are imprisoned within the vine-laden walls of the gardens. The little virgin forest of wild cherry and young plum-trees dip their dainty roots timidly into the cold waters; their murmuring leaves angrily shiver when a little current of the night wind stealthily creeps in to caress them. The distant horizon sleeps, but above it and overhead all is palpitating life; august, triumphal, sublime! Like the firmament, the soul seems to open into endless space; silvery visions of grace and beauty arise before it. Oh, the charm of this divine night!

Suddenly life, animation, spreads through forest, lake, and steppe. The nightingale's majestic trill resounds through the air; the moon

seems to stop, embosomed in clouds, to listen. The little village on the hill is wrapt in an enchanted slumber; its cluster of white cottages gleams vividly in the moonlight, and the outlines of their low walls are sharply clear-cut against the dark shadows. All songs are hushed; silence reigns in the homes of these simple peasants. But here and there a twinkling light appears in a little window of some cottage, where supper has waited for a belated occupant.

Gogol's reputation as a humorist is strongly supported by his comedy "Revizor" (The Inspector-General). It is held to be the best comedy in the Russian language, and, while it brought out no immediate followers, it did arouse an immense amount of amused discussion at the time of its production.

The plot is simple enough. The officials of a provincial government office are looking for the arrival of an inspector, who was supposed to be coming *incognito* to inspect their accounts. A traveller happens to arrive at the inn, and him they all suppose to be the dreaded official. Made anxious by their guilty consciences, each attempts to plead his own cause with the supposed judge, and no one hesitates to denounce a colleague in order to better his own standing. The traveller is at first amazed, but he is astute enough to accept the situation and pocket the money. The confusion grows until the crash of the final thunderbolt, when the real inspector arrives upon the scene.

In his "Confessions of an Author," Gogol says: "In the 'Revizor,' I tried to present in a mass the results arising from the one crying evil of Russia, as I recognized it in that year; to expose every crime that is committed in those offices, where the strictest uprightness should be required and expected. I meant to satirize the great evil. The effect produced upon the public was a sort of terror; for they felt the force of my true sentiments, my real sadness and disgust, through the gay satire."

The play was received with uproarious laughter all over the empire, but it is a singular comment upon the Russian character of the period to observe that, while it produced so great a furor that the Czar read it with tears of laughter and afterwards handsomely pensioned the author, it led to no official reforms.

A single specimen of its dry humor will illustrate. I quote from Turner's "Studies in Russian Literature."

The prefect is alarmed at the intelligence that his superior, the revising [inspecting] officer, may be expected on any day or at any hour, and begs the postmaster to open all the letters that may in the meantime pass through his office. That exemplary official informs him that such has always been his custom, "not from any state reason," as he takes care to explain, "but from curiosity;" some of the letters he had opened being so entertaining, that he really could not find the heart to send them on, but had kept them in his desk. When reminded by a cautious colleague that this is likely to get him into trouble with the public, the prefect

cuts short the remonstrance by crying out, "Oh, *batoushka* [a diminutive term of endearment, meaning practically "little father"], don't you see this is a family affair of our own? What have the public to do with it?"

Gogol founded the realistic school in Russia when he produced his masterpiece "Dead Souls," a work sufficiently powerful to raise him at once to the pinnacle of literary fame. The idea of the book consists of the ingenious plan of a certain Tchitchikoff, who had lost his place in consequence of his misdemeanors in the custom house having been discovered. In order to retrieve his fortune he visits different landed proprietors and buys from them the names of all their serfs who had died since the last census. Having thus established an ownership, he succeeds in borrowing large sums of money by giving the names of the dead serfs as security, since these dead souls had been legally made over to him. Naturally, the bankers think that they are making the loan upon good live collateral. What becomes of Tchitchikoff, we do not know, for Gogol destroyed the manuscript of the last section of his work—some say, in a fit of abstraction; others, under the influence of religious enthusiasm.

Upon this framework, the author has produced a series of remarkable descriptions—not pure realism, indeed, in our modern acceptance of the term, but rather akin to the realism of Dickens. Its truthful picture of Russian life, its repellent yet attractive qualities, its penetratingly keen analysis of character, caused Pushkin to exclaim when Gogol read him the first chapters of his book, "God, how miserable life is in Russia!"

Rarely do power and delicacy unite in a stylist as they do in Gogol. For the one, we may find an origin in his love for the sun-steeped and snow-blown plains of his native Cossack country—a love which constantly manifested itself in a real nostalgia, yet never brought him back for long from his wanderings, especially in Italy. But for the other, that delicate power of evocation—that compound of Loti's subtlety of nature-sense, Hoffmann's light fantasy, and Daudet's airy narrative manner, half-humorous, half-pathetic—for this we must look to some inborn faculty. In any other writer we might trace this gossamer lightness to much commerce with the thoughts of women. But no woman ever entered largely into Gogol's life, and when he died, on March 4, 1852, being not yet forty-three years of age, his mother—always his mother—was still his only love. His last days were shadowed by a growing ineptitude. His frail body weakened by religious fastings, his resources scattered by prodigal gifts, his mind enfeebled and depressed—his passing was sad, lonely, and almost unnoticed.

Gogol was the first great prose artist in Russian literature. In the tale and the sketch, in comedy, in romance, and in realism, he not only blazed new trails but penetrated so far into the unknown that others for a long time followed only at a distance. But follow they did, for, as

one of his compatriot wits has observed, "We have all hidden under 'The Cloak.'"

The masterpiece of fantastic narration and character delineation which follows in translation was published, under the title "Shinel," in 1839, when Gogol was thirty. It is over-long, according to our modern standards, yet not as a piece of artistic workmanship. Its humor, its suggestiveness, its pathos, its whimsicality, all rank it with the world's great short fictions.

THE CLOAK

Synopsis of the first part of the story.

AKAKI AKAKIEVICH is a minor official in a department of Russia; he is short of stature, pockmarked, bald, and wrinkled, and altogether an eccentric. A more monotonous existence than his could not be conceived, for he takes no recreation, but devotes all his time during business, and much of that outside, to copying documents. His chiefs treat him with cold despotism, his fellow-workers torment him. As he pays no attention to his attire, and as he is very unlucky, his appearance is always most unprepossessing. Yet he is content with his lot, poor as it is. Finally the extreme cold makes him recognize that his old, much-patched cloak no longer gives him warmth. He takes it to Petrovich to have it mended, but the tailor tells him that the cloth has become so rotten that he cannot do anything with it, and urges Akaki to order a new one. Though the new cloak will require an unheard-of proportion of his pitiful stipend, besides eating up all his savings, Akaki determines to make the purchase. So, after practising the most painful economies for months, the money is made up, the material purchased, and the cloak finished. Akaki has lived with the cherished ideal so long that at length the cloak has become an institution.

IT was—it is difficult to say precisely on what day; but probably the most triumphant day in Akaki Akakievich's life was when Petrovich at last brought the cloak. He brought it in the morning, just before the time necessary to start for the department. It could not have arrived at a more opportune moment, because a severe cold had set in, and it seemed to threaten to become even colder. Petrovich himself brought the cloak, as befits a good tailor. His face expressed such an extraordinary significance as Akaki Akakievich never had beheld there before. It was evident that he felt he had done no small thing, and that he had suddenly revealed in himself the abyss which separates these tailors who sew on mere linings and do mending from those who make an entire new garment. He drew out the cloak from a handkerchief in which he brought it. The handkerchief had just come from the laundress, so, folding it, he put it in his pocket for use. Holding up the cloak proudly in both his hands, he very deftly threw it on Akaki Akakievich's shoulders, after which he pulled it down with his hand from behind, and let it hang unbuttoned. Akaki Akakievich, like a man wise in

years, wished to try the sleeves; Petrovich helped him in them; the sleeves too fitted well. In short, the cloak was all that was wanted of it. Petrovich did not let the opportunity pass to remark that it was only because he conducted his establishment without a signboard and in a small street, and had known Akaki Akakievich for so long, that he charged him so cheaply, and that on Nevski Prospect they would have charged him seventy-five rubles for the work alone. Akaki Akakievich did not wish to argue the matter with Petrovich, and feared all large amounts, of which Petrovich loved to speak soundingly. He paid and thanked him, and set forth in his new cloak to the department. Petrovich followed him, and for a long time his gaze lingered on the cloak from a distance, and then, making a short cut through a side street, he reappeared to view the cloak from another point—namely, directly in front.

As for Akaki Akakievich, he walked on, experiencing exultation in every part of his body. At every step he felt conscious of the new cloak upon his shoulders, and several times he even smiled from internal gratification. Indeed, the cloak had two advantages: it was warm, and it was handsome. He did not notice the road at all, and suddenly found himself in the department. He threw off the cloak in the porter's room, and after surveying it he confided it to the special care of the attendant. It is impossible to tell how every one in the department suddenly knew that Akaki Akakievich had a new cloak, and that the cape no longer existed. All at once ran into the porter's room to inspect the garment. They began to congratulate him, so that at the beginning he smiled and afterwards even felt ashamed. When, however, every one surrounding him said that the new cloak should be christened, and that at least he should give them all a party some evening, Akaki Akakievich lost his head completely, and did not know what to do, what to say, and how to get out of it. For several minutes, blushing, he tried to assure them, in a sufficiently naïve manner, that the cloak was not at all a new one; that it was, in fact, an old cloak. In the end, one of the officials who served as assistant to the head clerk, evidently wishing to show that he was not at all proud and did not condescend towards his inferiors, said: "So be it; I, instead of Akaki Akakievich, will give the party, and I invite you all to my house to-night. As it happens, it is my birthday." Naturally, the officials then congratulated the head clerk's assistant and accepted the invitation eagerly. Akaki Akakievich at first wished to decline, but every one started to impress upon him how discourteous it was, and that it was a shame and a disgrace, so that he could not refuse. Besides, he afterwards began to feel pleasure in the thought that he would have an opportunity to spend an evening in his new cloak.

That entire day was like a triumphant holiday for Akaki Akakievich.

He returned home in the happiest possible frame of mind, threw off his cloak, and hung it carefully on the wall, his eye revelling once more in the cloth and the lining; he afterwards held up beside it, for comparison, the old cape, now all fallen to pieces. He laughed, so great was the difference. And even a long time after dinner he smiled each time the condition of his old cape occurred to him. He dined cheerfully, and did not copy afterwards any papers, but rested upon his bed, until it grew dark. Afterwards, wasting no time, he dressed himself, placed the cloak across his shoulders, and went into the street.

Just where the inviting official lived, we unfortunately cannot say; our memory is beginning to fail us, and the St. Petersburg streets and houses have so badly massed and mixed themselves in our head that it is most difficult to establish any kind of order out of all the chaos. However that may be, at least it is certain that the official lived in the better part of the city, from which may be guessed that it was anywhere but near Akaki Akakievich's neighborhood. At first he had to pass through several dimly lighted, deserted streets, but in proportion as he approached the official's residence the streets grew more lively, more populous, and more brightly illuminated; pedestrians grew in greater numbers; women too, handsomely dressed, began to appear; some of the men even wore beaver collars; peasants with their wooden fence-rail sledges, hammered over with yellow-headed nails, were more rarely met with; on the other hand, drivers with red velvet caps, in lacquered sledges, with bear-skin coverings, were becoming more frequent; and beautifully ornamented carriages flew swiftly through the street.

Akaki Akakievich gazed upon all this as upon a novelty; it was now several years since he had passed an evening in the streets. He paused with curiosity before a lighted shop-window to look at a picture in which was represented a handsome woman taking off her shoe and baring her entire foot very prettily, while behind her a man with whiskers and a handsome mustache peeped through the door of another room. Akaki Akakievich shook his head and laughed, and then continued his journey. Why did he laugh? Was it because he had met a thing altogether unfamiliar to him, but for which, however, every one cherishes some sort of feeling, or was it because he thought about it as many other officials would: "Ah, those French! What is there to say? When they want to do anything like that, they do it rather well!" And it is possible that he did not think such a thing at all. After all, it is impossible to steal into a man's soul and to discover all that he thinks.

At last he reached the house in which lived the head clerk's assistant. This man resided in grand style; the staircase was lighted by a lamp, his quarters were on the second floor. Entering the vestibule, Akaki Akakievich observed several rows of galoshes on the floor. Among them,

in the middle of the room, stood the *samovar*; it was humming and emitting clouds of steam. The walls were covered with cloaks and mantles, among which were even a few with beaver collars or with velvet lapels. Behind the wall were audible the noise and conversation, which suddenly grew clear and loud when the door opened and the servant came out with a trayful of empty glasses, a cream-jug, and a sugar-bowl. It was evident that the officials had arrived some time ago and had had their first glass of tea.

Akaki Akakievich, having hung up his cloak himself, entered the room, and his astonished gaze took in at once the lights, the officials, the pipes, and the card-tables, and he was confused by the sound of conversation rising from all sides and the noise of moving chairs. He paused very awkwardly in the middle of the room, pondering what he should do. But he had already been noticed, and he was received with shouts, every one running towards the vestibule to survey his cloak anew. Although Akaki Akakievich was somewhat astonished, still, being a simple-hearted man, he could not help but feel flattered, seeing how well his cloak was liked. Afterwards, it goes without saying, they forgot him and his cloak, and returned quite properly to the tables appointed for whist. All this—the noise, the conversation, and the size of the gathering—all this was strange to Akaki Akakievich. He simply did not know what to do with himself, where to put his hands, his feet, and his entire body; finally he seated himself near the players, looked at the cards, or into the face of now one, now another, and after a time began to grow drowsy, and to feel a certain feeling of weariness, all the more because his accustomed hour for going to bed had long passed. He wished to bid his host good-night, but he was not permitted to depart; they insisted that he drink a glass of champagne in honor of his new garment. In another hour supper was served; it consisted of a relish, cold veal, pastry, sweets, and champagne. Akaki Akakievich was made to drink two glasses of champagne, after which the room assumed to him a livelier aspect; nevertheless, he could not forget that it was twelve o'clock, and that he should have been home long ago. In order that the host might not detain him, he stole silently out of the room, sought out in the anteroom his cloak, which to his sorrow he found lying on the floor; he brushed it, removed every speck of dust from it, put it on his shoulders, and descended the stairs into the street.

The street was as yet all alight. Some of the petty shops, those permanent clubs of servants and all sorts of people, were open; others, however, which were closed, showed a long streak of light through the entire length of the door-crack, suggesting that they did not lack company, probably servants of both sexes, who were concluding their gossip and conversation, and keeping their masters in complete ignorance of their whereabouts. Akaki Akakievich walked in a happy frame of

mind, started even to run, for an unknown reason, after a woman, who flashed by him like lightning. After this, however, he paused and resumed his former leisure pace, wondering at his own sudden spurt. Very soon there stretched before him the deserted streets, not particularly cheerful even by day, and much less so by night. Now they seemed even more than usually dark and lonely; the lights were growing further apart; then came wooden houses and fences; not a soul anywhere; only the snow sparkled in the streets; and the slumbering low-roofed cabins with closed shutters looked melancholy against the snow. He was approaching the spot where the street cut through a vast square, with houses on the other side barely visible across the desert space.

In the distance, God knows how far, a tiny flame glimmered in a watchman's box, which seemed to verge on the edge of the world. Akaki Akakievich's cheerfulness diminished here perceptibly. He entered the square not without a certain involuntary fear; not without some foreboding of evil. He glanced behind him and on both sides—a sea appeared to surround him. "No, it is better not to look," he thought, and walked on with closed eyes; and when he opened them to see whether or not he had reached the end of the square, he suddenly beheld before him, almost under his very nose, some bearded individuals, precisely what sort he could not distinguish. Everything grew dark before his eyes and his heart began to throb.

"But I say the cloak is mine," said one of the men in a loud voice, seizing him by the collar.

Akaki Akakievich wished to cry out, "Help!" when the other man put his fist, the size of an official's head, to his very mouth, and said, "Just try to make a noise!"

Akaki Akakievich only felt conscious of how they removed the cloak from his shoulders, then gave him a parting kick, which sent him headlong into the snow; after that he felt no more.

In a few minutes he recovered consciousness and rose to his feet, but no one was to be seen. He felt cold, and the absence of his cloak; he began to shout, but his voice did not seem to reach the bounds of the square. Desperate, not ceasing to shout, he started to run across the square straight towards the watchman's box, beside which stood the watchman, leaning upon his halberd, and looking, as it were, with eager expectancy for an explanation as to this strange fellow's running and shouting. Akaki Akakievich, having reached him, began to shout in a gasping voice that he was asleep and did not attend to his business, and let people rob a man. The watchman replied that he saw nothing except two men stop and talk to him in the middle of the square, and that he thought they were his friends; he also suggested that rather than waste time on talk he should report the matter to the police captain, and that he would find the man who had taken the cloak.

Akaki Akakievich arrived home in complete disorder; his hair, which thrived in no large numbers upon his temples and the back of his head, was in a dishevelled state; while his entire body was covered with snow. His old landlady, on hearing a loud knocking on the door, sprang quickly out of bed, and with only one shoe on ran to open the door, holding her night-gown, out of modesty, to her breast. Having opened the door, she drew back upon seeing the condition of her lodger. When he explained what had happened she wrung her hands and advised him to inform the district chief of police at once; that a lesser official would only promise without doing anything; besides, she had some acquaintance with the chief, because Anna, her former cook, had just become a nurse at his house. She saw him very often pass her house, and, moreover, she knew that he went to church every Sunday, and that as he prayed he looked cheerily at the same time upon all, and therefore was, to all appearances, a good man. Having listened to this suggestion, Akaki Akakievich very sadly betook himself to his room, and as to how he spent the night there may be imagined by those who have the faculty of putting themselves in the place of others.

Early next morning he visited the district chief, and was told that he was asleep; he went again at ten, with the same result; at eleven they told him the chief was not at home; when he went at dinner-time, the clerks in the anteroom would not admit him, but demanded to know the business that brought him; so that finally Akaki Akakievich, for once in his life, showed a spark of courage and said firmly that he must see the district chief personally, that they dared not refuse him, as he came from the department upon official business, and that if they persisted he would present a complaint against them, which would make them sorry. The clerks dared not reply to this, and one of them went in to call the chief.

Instead of directing his attention to the important point of the case, he began to cross-examine Akaki Akakievich. Why was he returning home so late? Did he stop on the way in any disorderly house? In the end Akaki Akakievich was so completely confused that he went out not knowing whether anything would be done about the cloak or not.

The entire day he did not appear in the department—the first time in his life. The next day, he arrived at his place, looking very pale and in his old cape, which had grown even sadder looking. The news of the robbery of the cloak—notwithstanding the fact that some of the officials did not permit even this opportunity to pass without laughing at Akaki Akakievich—nevertheless touched many. They decided to take up a collection for him, but succeeded in obtaining a mere trifle; as the officials had already spent considerable money in subscribing for the director's portrait, and for a book, at the suggestion of the chief of the bureau, who was a friend of the author; hence the insignificance of the sum.

Some one, out of pity, wished at least to help Akaki Akakievich with good advice; and so he told him not to go to the captain, for though the captain might really wish to earn the approbation of the chiefs and find the cloak in some way or other, the cloak itself would nevertheless remain with the police, unless he could show legal proof that it was his; he ought therefore to apply to a certain *important personage*; and this *important personage*, by dealing with the proper persons, could hasten and expedite matters. There was nothing else to do but to turn to the *important personage*.

What was the precise function of the *important personage* remains unknown to this day. One point should be made clear: that this particular *important personage* only recently had become an *important personage*, and that until quite lately he had been an unimportant personage. And aside from that, his position was not even now considered important when compared with that of other more important personages. There will always be, however, a circle of people to whom what is unimportant to other people is sufficiently important. Then, again, he bent all efforts to increase his importance through numerous other means. For instance, he instituted the custom of having his inferiors lined up on the stairway to greet his arrival at the department; he also insisted that no one should venture to appear before him directly, but that everything should follow in most unrelenting order; the collegiate registrar should report to the government secretary, the government secretary to the titular councillor, or to whoever was the proper official, and that in this manner the business should finally come to him.

This habit of imitation has infected all of Holy Russia: every one imitates and mimics his superiors. It is even said that a certain titular councillor, when promoted to the head of some small separate office, immediately partitioned off a private room, calling it the "audience chamber"; he placed at the door two attendants in red collars and braid, whose sole duty consisted in taking the door by the handle and opening it to every comer, although the "audience chamber" had barely room enough to contain an ordinary writing-table.

The ways and manners of the *important personage* were impressive and imposing, but somewhat overdone. The main principle of his system was strictness. "Strictness, strictness—and strictness," he used to say generally; and always when pronouncing the last word looked significantly at the person whom he was addressing; although this was altogether unnecessary, because the ten officials, constituting the entire mechanism of his office, were afraid of him; and, seeing him even from afar, they would stop all work and assume a respectful attitude until their chief had passed through the room. His usual conversation with his inferiors consisted almost entirely of three phrases! "How dare you? Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you realize

who stands before you?" Otherwise, he was a good-natured man and solicitous towards his comrades; but the rank of general unhinged his mind completely. Upon receiving this rank, he lost his head, and did not know what to do with himself. When he happened to be in the company of his equals, he still managed to do the proper thing, to be a gentleman, and in many respects quite a clever fellow; but once in the company of folk even a single rank below him, he simply became helpless; he was silent, and his condition aroused sympathy, the more so as he himself felt that he could have passed the time incomparably happier. At times the desire to join in some conversation or circle was strongly evident in his eyes; but the following thought always arrested him: would it not be regarded as a familiarity, and would it not detract from his importance? In consequence of such reasoning, he remained in the same eternal mood of silence, uttering only rarely some monosyllabic sounds; and thereby earning the name of a most wearisome person.

Before an *important personage* of this type appeared our Akaki Akakievich, and at a most inopportune moment—that is to say, for himself, but opportune for the important personage. The important personage was in his cabinet conversing very cheerfully with an old acquaintance and friend of his youth, whom he had not seen for many years. It was at such a time that they told him of a certain Bashmachkin who wished to see him. He asked abruptly, "Who is he?" They answered him, "Some sort of official." "Ah, let him wait, now is not the time," said the important personage. It is necessary to mention here that the important personage simply lied; he had the time to spare; he had already talked over everything with his friend, and the conversation had begun some time ago to lag with long silences; and they merely continued to tap each other on the leg, and exclaim: "That's how it is, Ivan Abramovich!" "That's so, Stepan Varlamovich!" Nevertheless, he caused the official to wait in order to show his friend, a man some time out of the service and living in a village, how long he compelled officials to wait for him in the anteroom.

Finally, having conversed to his heart's content and having had also his fill of silence and smoked a cigar in a very comfortable chair with an easy back, he bethought himself all of a sudden as it were, and said to the secretary who stood at the door with papers needing his signature, "Oh, yes, I believe an official is waiting to see me; tell him to come in." On seeing Akaki Akakievich's humble aspect and his shabby uniform, he suddenly turned to him and said, "What is it you wish?" He put this question abruptly and in a hard voice, which he had practised in his own room, when alone, and before the mirror, a full week before receiving his present position and rank.

Akaki Akakievich, who already felt a certain timorousness, became somewhat confused, and as far as his power of speech would permit

explained, with an even more frequent employment than usual of the word "that," that his cloak was quite new, and was stolen in a most inhuman manner, and that he was now applying to him to use his influence with the chief of police or some one else to find his cloak.

The general, for some reason or other, regarded such conduct as familiar. "What, dear sir," said he in his abrupt manner, "are you ignorant of the rules? Why do you come to me? Do you not know how such matters are managed? You should have first presented a petition to the office; it would have then gone to the chief clerk, then to the clerk of the division, then to the secretary, and the secretary would have reported it to me——"

"But, your Excellency," said Akaki Akakievich, gathering together his final remnant of courage, and breaking out into a terrible perspiration, "I, your Excellency, have presumed to trouble you because, you see, the secretaries are that—an untrustworthy race——"

"What! what! what!" ejaculated the important personage. "Where do you get the courage? Where did you get such ideas? What a spirit of impertinence has spread among the young generation against their chiefs and superiors!"

The important personage, apparently, had not noticed that Akaki Akakievich was already a man of about fifty, and that if he could be called a young man, it was only in comparison with one who was seventy.

"Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you realize who stands before you? Do you realize it? Do you realize it? Answer me!"

At this point he stamped his foot, and raised his voice to such a high pitch that even a man different from Akakievich would have been frightened. Akaki Akakievich grew faint; he reeled; trembled from head to foot; then his legs gave way under him; if several attendants had not run to support him, he would have fallen to the floor. They carried him out more dead than alive. The important personage, much gratified that the effect he produced far exceeded all expectation, and thoroughly intoxicated with the thought that even a word from him could deprive a man of his senses, looked askance at his friend to see how that individual regarded the matter, and observed, not without satisfaction, that his friend was in a most uncomfortable state and was beginning to show on his part certain signs of fear.

How he managed to descend the stairway, and into the street—of this Akaki Akakievich remembered nothing. He was unconscious of either hands or feet. Never before in his life had he been so reprimanded by a superior, let alone an unfamiliar one. He walked in the snow-storm which whistled through the streets; his mouth open, he staggered along the sidewalks; the wind blew upon him in St. Petersburg fashion from all four sides and every crossing. In an instant it had

blown a quinsy down his throat, and he arrived at home all swollen and too weak to utter a word. He lay down on his bed.

The next day a high fever developed. Thanks to the generous assistance of the St. Petersburg climate, the illness advanced more rapidly than could be expected; and when the doctor appeared and felt his pulse, there was nothing for him to do except to prescribe a poultice, for no other reason but that the patient be not deprived of the beneficent aid of medicine; at the same time he predicted his inevitable end in thirty-six hours, after which he turned to the landlady and said, "And you, my woman, had better not lose any time about it, and order a pine coffin for him, as an oak one will be too expensive."

Did Akaki Akakievich hear these fatal words? And if he heard them, did they agitate him? Did he bewail the bitterness of his life? It is uncertain, because he spent his last hours in fever and delirium. Visions, one stranger than the other, continued to appear before him. Now he saw Petrovich and ordered him to make a cloak with traps for thieves whom he imagined to be constantly under his bed; and he more than once called for his landlady to drag a thief from under his bed-cover. Then he inquired why the old cloak hung in front of him when he had a new one. Several times he fancied himself as standing before the general addressing him as "Your Excellency" and pleading with him after the reprimand; and finally he began to utter imprecations, employing the most terrible words, so that the aged housekeeper, never before having heard the like, made a sign of the cross, all the more since these curses usually followed after the words "Your Excellency." Later he began to utter sheer nonsense; one thing, however, was evident: all his incoherent words and thoughts hovered around the one and the same cloak.

At last poor Akaki Akakievich gave up his spirit. The usual legal procedure with regard to his room and his effects was not followed, because in the first place there were no heirs; and in the second, because he left so little property; namely, a bundle of goose-quills, a quire of white official paper, three pairs of socks, two or three buttons that had come off his trousers, and the cape already familiar to the reader. To whom all this fell, God knows; this, I must confess, did not interest even him who relates this story.

They bore Akaki Akakievich away and buried him. And so St. Petersburg was left without Akaki Akakievich, as though he had never been there. A being disappeared, who was protected by none, dear to none, interesting to none, and who did not even attract to himself the attention of the student who does not let an opportunity slip by to put a pin through a common fly and to examine it under the microscope—a being who endured humbly the ridicule of his brother officials and went to his grave without having experienced a single notable event, but for whom nevertheless, at the very close of his life, came a radiating guest

in the shape of a cloak, which cheered for an instant his sorry existence; and upon whom there afterwards descended an intolerable misfortune, such as descends even upon the heads of the mighty of this world!

A few days after his death, an attendant was sent to his house to request him to report immediately at the department; but the attendant returned to his chief with the rather unsatisfactory answer that he could not come, and to the question, "Why?" replied, "Well, you see, he's dead! He was buried four days ago." In this manner did they hear of Akaki Akakievich's death in the department, and the next day in his place sat a new official, much taller in stature, and forming his letters not quite so upright, but very much inclined and aslant.

But who could have imagined that this was not the end of Akaki Akakievich, and that he was destined to live through several stirring days after his death, in compensation, as it were, for his unnoticed life? But it so happened, and our poor history takes an unexpectedly fantastic conclusion.

St. Petersburg was suddenly startled by rumors that on the Kalinkin Bridge and in its vicinity there had begun to appear nightly a corpse, in the shape of an official, seeking a stolen cloak, and that under the pretense that it was the stolen cloak he dragged off, regardless of rank or calling, every one's cloak from his shoulders, whether it was cat-skin, beaver, raccoon, fox, or bear—in short, every variety of fur and skin which man had thought of for his covering. One of the department officials saw the dead with his own eyes and immediately recognized in him Akaki Akakievich; this, however, so frightened him that he began to run with all his might, and was therefore unable to observe him closely, but only saw him raise a threatening finger from afar.

Complaints began to come in from all quarters that the backs and shoulders, not alone of titular but even of court councillors, were being exposed to the danger of a cold, because of this frequent deprivation of their cloaks. The police made arrangements to catch the corpse, at all costs, either alive or dead, and to deal with him most severely, as an example to others. In this they almost succeeded. A watchman in Kirishkin Lane seized the corpse by the collar on the very spot of his misdeeds; for he was in the act of dragging off the frieze cloak of a retired musician, who in his day had blown the flute. The watchman's shout for help fetched two comrades to his side and into their hands he committed the marauder, while he himself thrust his hand for a moment into his boot for his snuff-box, in order to refresh temporarily his frozen nose. The snuff, however, must have been of such poor quality that even the corpse could not stand it. Ere the watchman who, having closed his right nostril with his thumb, had had time to apply a half-handful of the snuff to his left nostril, the corpse sneezed so violently that the three of them were soon wiping their eyes; and while

they were doing this, he vanished so completely that they were not even sure whether he had been actually in their hands. Henceforth the watchmen were so apprehensive of dead men that they even refrained from laying their hands on the living, and only dared to exclaim at a distance, "Hey, there, go your way!" As for the dead official, he began to appear even beyond the Kalinkin Bridge, creating no slight terror among all timid people.

We have, however, wholly neglected a *certain important personage*, who had been the actual cause of the fantastic turn taken by this true history. First of all, in justice to the *certain important personage*, it is necessary to say that immediately after the departure of the poor, totally crushed Akaki Akakievich, he experienced an emotion akin to pity. It was not new to him—this feeling of sympathy; his heart was really accessible to many good impulses, notwithstanding the fact that his rank often interfered with their outward manifestation. No sooner had his friend gone than he began to think about the poor Akaki Akakievich. And nearly every day thereafter there appeared before him the pale Akaki Akakievich, who was unable to bear up under an official reprimand. The thought agitated him to such an extent that after a week had passed he resolved even to send an official to learn his condition, and to see whether he could really assist him. When it was reported to him that Akaki Akakievich had died suddenly of fever, he was dumfounded, suffered the reproaches of conscience, and was in poor spirits all day long.

Desiring some diversion, and to drive away the disagreeable impression, he went in the evening to the house of one of his friends, where he found a likely crowd, all the more pleasant because nearly every one was of the one and the same rank, so that he was not in any way embarrassed. This fact had a most astounding effect on his spirits. He opened his heart, made himself very agreeable in conversation; in short, he passed a charming evening. After supper he drank two glasses of champagne, an excellent method, as every one knows, for arousing cheerfulness.

The champagne communicated in him an inclination towards various enterprises, and he decided not to go directly home, but to visit a certain well-known lady named Karolina Ivanovna—probably of German extraction—with whom he was on quite friendly terms.

The important personage, therefore, descended the staircase, entered his sledge, and said to the driver, "To Karolina Ivanovna!" Then wrapping himself luxuriously in his warm cloak, settled into that happy mood, better than which cannot be even imagined by the Russian; it is that state when you are not thinking of anything in particular, but the thoughts crowd in upon you of themselves, one pleasanter than the other, and calling for no exertion on your part to pursue them or seek them. Gratified beyond measure, he recalled all the gay features of the

evening, all the remarks and all the stories that made the little circle laugh; many of these he repeated in a low voice and found them just as funny as before.

Occasionally, however, he was hindered by an impetuous wind, which, arising suddenly, God only knows whence and why, cut his face, and beat snow into it, or caused the collar of his cloak to burst out like a sail, and then blew it back over his head, with a supernatural force, as it were, and this gave him no end of trouble to disentangle his head out of its folds.

Suddenly the important personage felt some one grip him by the collar. Turning around, he noticed a man of small stature, dressed in a shabby old uniform, and not without terror recognized in him Akaki Akakievich. The face of the man was pale as snow, like that of a dead man. But the horror of the important personage exceeded all bounds when he saw the mouth of the corpse open, and, breathing upon him the terrible odor of the grave, heard it utter the following remarks: "Ah, so here you are, at last! At last, I have you that—caught you by the collar! I need your cloak! You did n't give a thought to mine, and even reprimanded me. Well, now, give me yours!"

The poor *important personage* almost died of fright. Despite his manifestation of character in his office and before his inferiors generally, and although every one, on noting his manly figure and aspect, could not help but remark, "What a strong character!" Here, however, he, like many others possessed of an heroic exterior, was so terrified that, not without cause, he felt as though he would die on the spot. With his own hands he flung the cloak off his shoulders and shouted to the driver in an unnatural voice, "Home, at full speed!" The driver, hearing the tone, generally employed in critical moments, and accompanied in this case by something much more emphatic, assumed the physical attitude of an emergency, flourished his whip, and darted off like an arrow.

In six minutes or so, the important personage was before his own house. Pale, frightened, and without his cloak, instead of being at Karolina Ivanovna's, he was in his own house; and he managed somehow to reach his own room, where he passed the night in great agitation, so that the next morning at tea his daughter said, "You are very pale to-day, Papa." But Papa was silent, and said not a word to any one about what had happened, where he had been, and whither he was bound. This event made a powerful impression on him. He even much more rarely said to his subordinates, "How dare you? Do you realize who stands before you?" And if he did utter these words it was not until he had heard out all the facts of the case.

Still more remarkable was that from that day on the corpse of the official ceased to appear. Evidently the general's cloak fitted his

shoulders perfectly; at least, no more stories were heard about the dragging off of cloaks. Many active and anxious people, however, were very apprehensive and insisted that the corpse was still at large in certain remote sections of the city. In fact, one watchman in the Kolomen district saw with his own eyes the apparition stalk forth from behind a house; but, being rather weak physically, he dared not arrest him, but simply followed him in the darkness, until at last the apparition suddenly turned upon him and said, "What do you want?" and displayed such a fist as is never seen on a living man. The watchman replied, "Nothing," and started back. The apparition, however, looking very tall and wearing enormous mustaches, directed his footsteps seemingly towards the Obukhov Bridge and vanished in the nocturnal darkness.



THE COSMIC THRALL

BY JANE BELFIELD

FOR I have thought so long on greater things,
And viewed from spreading hills a broader day,
That little wounds which stung have taken wings;
And even deeper hurts have ached away.

I may not joy so quickly as I did,
But neither do the tears so lightly fall.
The narrow confines of each day are hid,
By looking at what lieth under all.

I have become a part of what I see;
Small things that pass count not for weal nor woe:
A vast horizon hovers over me;
The landscape widens as I onward go.

THE NEW NEIGHBOR

By Charles C. Jones

"I'll tell you," began the Old Resident, as he leaned his chair back against the shady side of the hardware store, "this business of being a good neighbor is all right as long as it is all right, but it can go so far that it gets to be all wrong!"

The hardware man looked sympathetic. "Yep," he agreed; "that's the plain, unvarnished truth." Then he queried, tentatively, "What's the trouble with your neighbors?"

"Nothing at all, nothing at all," answered the Old Resident. "My neighbors are all as happy as anybody can be. I've got all the trouble. You see, it's like this: they borrow—everything except trouble.

"I've got a new neighbor up there next door to me. He's a young doctor, and he hung out his shingle in this town only about a week ago. I like to help young doctors—they need it, if anybody on earth does—so when this young fellow's wife came over to my house on the day they moved in and wanted to borrow a couple of pillows, I told my wife to let them go as far as they liked. My wife wanted to argue the question, but he—this young doctor—is a nice-looking sort of chap, and I wanted to be neighborly.

"Well, the doctor's wife went home with the pillows, and the next day she came over again to borrow a couple of sheets. My wife was n't at home, so I got out a pair of sheets and then threw in another one for good measure. I'm that kind of a man. But when my wife came home I caught it, because two of those sheets were her best ones, with initials worked in the corners. I tried for two hours to convince my wife that a man just had to be neighborly, but she could n't see it that way—at least, not that strong.

"The next night it rained, and it turned chilly along toward morning. I was sleeping the sleep of the just when there came a knock at my door that made me think that the house was on fire—hearty fellow, that doctor!—so I jumped into my breeches and hustled downstairs in my bare feet, and there stood that young cut-up at the door. He wanted to borrow a blanket, so I let him have a pair and went back to bed, and when my wife quit talking, I went to sleep and dreamed about a camel putting its head into a tent. It was my tent.

"The next afternoon I went to town, and while I was away both the doctor and his wife came over and put up some sort of a story to my wife and persuaded her to lend them a bed to go with the bed-clothes. We had only one bed, so we had to sleep on the floor.

"One night of that was more than I could stand. I caught a cold in my head that made me talk like water running out of a jug. I called in the young 'doc' because I wanted to be neighborly, even if I did have to sleep on the floor to do it. He made eight visits in two days, and he charged me two dollars a visit; and on one of his professional calls he borrowed a bed-spread."

"Pretty tough, I say!" commented the hardware man.

"But that ain't all," ejaculated the Old Resident, "and it ain't the worst part, by a long shot! What do you think that fellow had the nerve to say?"

"I haven't any idea," replied the hardware man. "What did he say?"

"I hate to tell you," sighed the Old Resident. "He advised me not to expose myself—said a man at my time of life ought to know better than to sleep on the floor. And he said that, being a medical man, he was just naturally a close observer, and that he thought old fellows nowadays was n't as strong as they used to be. And my wife says that he is a sensible doctor. What do you think of that?"

"Humph!" snorted the hardware man, as he ran his fingers through his beard. "I think you ought to lend that young fellow enough money to move with!"



DOUBT

BY MARGARET LOUISE LOUDON

ARE you sure that you are he
 Whom I waited, incomplete?
 Songs of lesser loves are sweet;
 How can I, so tenderly
 Lulled to rapture, now refute
 Treacherous sweetness of love's lute?

Tell me, how can one be sure,
 In this fleet and fervent hour,
 Which the buds that come to flower,
 Which shall fade and which endure?
 All I know is that your song
 Calls me. . . . Yet the years are long.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

PEACE AND COMMON SENSE

UNIVERSAL peace would come quicker if its advocates did not leave all the common sense in international politics to the apologists for war.

Not a single nation in which the peace advocates have any noticeable strength is keeping up a military establishment one particle larger than is necessary for self-preservation. Yet these self-appointed champions of the dove and the olive branch keep urging these peaceful countries to further disarmament—to disarmament which would be but invitation to attack by the nations which believe in the gospel of war.

Take our own case, for example. We spend a vast sum on military matters each year, but we have no army, because our admirable soldiers are not trained to work together in masses of a size that would be useful in war. We have no reserve line, because we have followed the seveneenth-century custom of keeping a soldier with the colors until he is worn out. But the moment an effort is made to remedy these defects, so to organize our military affairs that we will have a mobile army and a useful reserve at less than the present cost of our military establishment, up goes a protest against "militarism," and down comes the deluge of patent sermons on the privileges of peace!

We spend a great deal of money on our navy, too—about one-third too much for the size of our fleet; but we get in return a navy that is unsurpassable of its size. But naval matters move rapidly; the fleet which would insure our safety three years ago cannot be expected to

do as much three years hence. Yet each naval appropriation—aside from the sums to be spent in political navy-yards—comes like pulling teeth; and no consistent effort is made to gauge the requirements of our fleet from year to year, and govern our building accordingly.

We do not need a big army. But what army we have should be mobile, trained for war work, and backed by a reasonable number of reserves. We do not need a vast navy. But we do need a navy larger than that of the only power which, without fear of land retaliation, can throw its whole naval strength against us. That power is Japan. The European states offset each other, and no one of them can use more than a fraction of its navy beyond European waters.

To meet these requirements, we need spend not a dollar more than we do now on warlike preparations. We need spend only with sense; and remember that we shall not help the cause of peace by offering, in our wealth and helplessness, a premium for war.

GEORGE L. KNAPP

WHERE FLOWERS HAVE NOT BLOOMED

NO spot in the habitable portions of the civilized globe has more in it of supreme and inhuman desolation than the Potter's Field, that ghastly Gehenna where the paupers and the outcasts lie unwept, unhonored, and unsung—indeed, unburied, if left to the charity of their fellow-beings not paid by the public to hide the destitute dead away. Every city of any size has its Potter's Field which stands in its lonely, unattended desolation as something to be ashamed of, and for ages have the Potter's Fields been thus to the cities which maintain them as necessary evils.

But a little light is breaking through; a sunbeam is falling across the shadow so long cast, and a change for the better is promised by a woman in New York City, who has taken upon herself the kindly task of remembering the friendless dead. This woman has planted flowers over the Potter's Field of New York, where one hundred and eighty thousand bodies lie, with no one to care until she came. It is no small work she has undertaken, and it cannot all be accomplished at once, but it is all prompted by goodness of heart and that human sympathy without which the whole world would be a Potter's Field.

Yet why should the Potter's Fields of all our cities be left desolate and bare? Why should they not be made pleasant to the eye and grateful to the heart? If the worldly minded are forgetful and careless, why should not all our churches combine in such a work of love, and each set aside some portion of its revenue for the perpetual care and beautifying of the last resting place of these poor—God's poor? True religion, the love of the Father, extends to all His children, and His viceregents on

earth, no more His children than those who lie in the Potter's Field, could do no more reverent work, no work of more unselfish human love, than this of uniting to make these deserts blossom as the rose for the uplifting of all living humanity.

There may be those who believe that only in consecrated ground must rest the ashes of the faithful, but that belief cannot alter the fact that every human being is one of God's creatures, to which all others owe some duty, and the unfortunates cast out by man are not, by reason of that, cast out by the Maker of us all. From the same dust we came, to the same dust we return, and we should hold that dust sacred until the final Judgment. The little the poor received while living, whosoever's fault it may have been, should not count altogether against them when dead. While they lived they might have been left to bear their own burdens, but dead they become the care of the living, who for their own sakes should not permit these Potter's Fields everywhere to be monuments of man's inhumanity to man.

W. J. LAMPTON

AN OLD SCIENCE UNDER A NEW NAME

EUGENICS has been called a new science, yet it was not merely theoretically known, but also practically applied, some eight or nine centuries before the Christian era. Lycurgus, the Spartan legislator, enacted laws regulating and limiting parenthood, and Plato in his "Republic" expresses his views regarding race culture in terms not unlike those used by the Eugenists of to-day.

The Greeks, with their passion for beauty of the body and keenness of the mind, were responsive to anything which would quicken either. Through careful sexual selection and an intensive cultivation of the physical and mental attributes of their race, they begot a type more nearly perfect physically and mentally than any people since has been able to produce. Here it is interesting for the Eugenist to note that beyond this moral obligation to his race, the Greek did not venture. His valor was equalled only by his treachery, and his worship of beauty did not preclude his deification of the grosser pleasures.

With the passing of the Greeks, Eugenics was not again actively considered until the present-day theory of evolution led men such as Sir Francis Galton to make a close study of heredity. Through the dark ages of the Christian era, man groped towards spiritual enlightenment; conscience was awakened in him, but not the power to discern clearly the relation of the spiritual and the physical forces. Now we have come to a new point in the making of history, when we are about to recognize the union of these forces, and perhaps it is but natural that in our enthusiasm we are setting about it in too rabid a manner.

How are we to start in this race culture, this "science of being well-born" as one writer puts it? Are we to prohibit marriage to the unfit? If so, how are we to discriminate? It is declared that we choose the mates for our stable and kennel favorites with more care than we do our daughters' husbands; that we inquire into a suitor's financial condition, we may even ask if he is a church member, but we seldom make it our business to know his physical qualifications. To be sure, it is a somewhat delicate matter, and the law does not help us. It is all very well to make physical fitness a requirement for joining the police force, but for entering matrimony all that is needed is the price of a certificate. Marriage, it would seem, is one of the least hampered of civil institutions.

Suppose, however, that the law does take a hand in the matter, as it promises to do. It may become right legally, but will it ever become right morally, to sterilize the unfit or even to ban them from marriage? Here again the Eugenist must take note of how many of the world geniuses were defective or born of so-called unfit stock—the great conquerors, Cæsar and Napoleon, the great thinkers, Samuel Johnson, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, and a list of others so long as to prove startling to the layman. While it is true that great families such as the Darwins, the Montagues, and the Agassizes have produced successive generations of great men, it is after all to the sporadic genius, sprung from humble unknown origin, often of unfit parents, that we owe the greatest debt.

Heaven knows we need a race of men well-born, physically and mentally, but we cannot, like the Greek, sacrifice the individual to the race. The lesson of the centuries surely teaches us the right of each human creature to live. Moreover, it is not by the sacrifice of its victims that we can do away with the race evil. One might as well execute each petty thief to do away with thievery. It is the cause that makes a race evil, as it is the cause which makes men steal, and this the Eugenist must remedy. The Public Conscience, now awakened to these evils, must arouse the private conscience.

NANNA E. FRANK



IS THE UNITED STATES USING UP ITS WORKING CAPITAL?

By Edward Sherwood Mead, Ph.D.

THE question of whether the United States is using up its working capital was recently raised in a private conversation by one of our world's greatest economists. He answered it in the affirmative. His explanation of the answer is of the greatest interest to all who have a personal concern in the future of American business.

The working capital of a country, said this economist, consists of the amount of food, clothing, and other materials which is turned out each year by the industrial machine. All these goods, except the small percentage which is carried over to the following year, are consumed by the people, by the workers and the idle; by men, women, and children, who work and produce, and by men, women, and children, who consume without producing.

If the country is to go on increasing in wealth, if the standard of general well being is to increase with the growth of population, a certain proportion of the output of the national industrial machine must be used to support producers who increase the capacity of the machine; in the concrete, to those who produce railroads, iron foundries, and cotton mills; who drain swamps, build irrigation dams, raise levees to protect low lands from inundation, produce commercial fertilizer to add to the productivity of land, produce agricultural implements to increase the efficiency of farm-labor, open new mines of iron or coal, increase the output of lumber,—in a word, add to the productive machinery, the fixed capital of Society. If the size and capacity of the industrial machine continues to keep pace with the growth of population, then the standard of material well-being will be maintained, or may even slowly increase.

On the other hand, if an increasing percentage of the productive energy of Society, congealed into commodities, is devoted to support the non-producing classes, or to support the unproductive activities of the producing classes, then the country must necessarily grow poorer. Expressed in the concrete, this means that the United

270 Is the U. S. Using Up Its Working Capital?

States is producing automobiles rather than traction engines and self-binders; producing and supporting moving-picture shows, steam yachts, and motor boats, rather than building railroads, or digging irrigation ditches.

If this is the case, as this great scientist contended, the outlook for the country is indeed gloomy. Nothing is in sight but a long period of depression, a period of retrenchment, of severe economy, of poverty and distress. It is easy to understand the reasoning which leads to this conclusion. Population, and the wants of each unit of the population, are constantly increasing. Unless the supply of the necessities and comforts of life increases to correspond, it will become increasingly difficult for the average man to get a living for his family. In order that this increase in the supply of necessities and comforts should be produced, the industrial machine must grow. If its growth is retarded, the inevitable consequence must be a growth in human wants at a more rapid rate than the means of satisfying those wants. It is contended by our friend, the economist, that this is the condition with which America is now confronted; that our people are using up, or rather misdirecting, their working capital to unproductive uses, and that, in consequence, they must soon begin to pay the price of national extravagance.



These statements, which have been made by many close students of contemporary financial history, are extremely disquieting, if they are based on facts. It is not a comfortable prospect, this vision of national poverty that is held out before us. We are accustomed to regard the future of the United States as a future of assured and increasing prosperity, a prosperity in which even the humblest immigrant laborer will each year have a larger share. To be plainly told that we, as a nation, have been violating the rules of business conduct, observance of which, alone, will insure our future prosperity, is to receive an unpleasant shock.

Are these gloomy prognostications founded on fact, or do they represent merely a flight of scientific fancy, rising far above the ground into the thin air of speculation and hazardous conjecture?

As soon as attention is directed to our problem, a number of facts of superficial observation tending strongly to support this conclusion immediately emerge. Every one is familiar with the vast increase in personal expenditure during the last decade. It is a poor home which has no sanitary plumbing, or which is still half heated by stoves, be it in the country or in the city. Even a humble mechanic expects these conveniences in his twenty-dollar-a-month house. Turkish rugs have taken the place of ingrain and rag carpets. Clothes are now made to

measure, and people, especially women, have more clothes than ever before. Men, too, are more careful of their personal appearance. They patronize the haberdasher and the tailor, the barber and the bootblack, to an extent which their fathers would not have ventured, and which their grandfathers would have condemned as wasteful extravagance. The "servant problem" did not become a problem until the middle class, upper and lower, began to keep domestic servants. The expenditure upon food is far greater than formerly, when an adult could be well fed at a total cost of \$1.50 per week for raw materials and fuel. To-day, not only have the prices of foodstuffs advanced, but a large number of expensive novelties, which quickly become regarded as necessities, are each year being introduced. The pure-food agitation, sound as its basis is, costs the consumer a great deal of money. It is well known, for example, that milk cannot be produced and sold at a reasonable profit for less than eight to ten cents a quart. Of this amount, the milk-producer gets four to five cents, and most of the balance represents the cost of furnishing to the credit customer a pasteurized product put up in a sanitary package, and kept at the low temperature required by law. Any man of forty can remember when the milkman served milk into a quart measure out of a big can, for five or six cents a quart. The advance in the standard and cost of living is responsible for the difference.



The automobile is no longer considered a luxury for the man of \$2000 income. He can buy, on time, for \$500 or \$600, a car that is very good, even compared with the high-priced machines; and thousands of these cars are being bought each month. Immediately the owner's expenses increase. Tires, toll, gasoline, oil, and general repairs, besides interest and depreciation, represent a large monthly outlay. In part, this is met by cutting down expenses in other directions; for example, in a Philadelphia suburb, inquiry showed that the women in a large number of middle-class families were doing their own work so that they could maintain automobiles. Most of the outlay on the automobile, however, represents new expense.

The cost of vacations is rapidly increasing. It is a poor family that cannot manage an annual sojourn at the seashore or in the mountains. European travel is becoming almost as common. For \$300 it is possible to spend a month in foreign travel, and the tourists' organizations which are responsible for this reduction in cost draw in many thousands to whom ten years ago a trip abroad was an iridescent dream.

So we could go on indefinitely: charity, organizations, clubs, politics, magazines, and newspapers, liquor and tobacco, bridge whist, golf, theatres, moving-picture shows, baseball, education—which costs this

generation at least twice as much as it did their fathers; the government service, which does or tries to do so many new things for us—the list of new expenditures and of increased expenditures could be expanded far beyond the space here available.

Assuredly our friend the economist has much to support his contention. Apparently, if we reason from the familiar facts of daily existence, America is using up its working capital. We are spending instead of saving. We must soon come to the day of reckoning, and the cost of reckoning will be heavy. The nation must pay in years of privation and pinching, sordid economy for its violation of the sound rules of private and public economy.

But are these conclusions sound? Are appearances and familiar facts to be relied upon? Is it possible that our eyes deceive us, and that these pessimistic conclusions and inferences are not based on facts? May it not be possible that while our national consumption is increasing so rapidly, the rate of increase in production is even greater, so that the nation is getting richer in spite of itself? I shall attempt to answer these questions in the September number.



PELLETS OF WISDOM

AN old love-letter can become as dangerous as an old gun.

Minna Thomas Antrim

THE man who wants to keep up with the times ought to go slow.

Harold Susman

FEAR sat on the river bank, Hope waded in, Nerve leaped across.

L. A. Browne

IF your sins find you out, they will hang around until you come in.

L. B. Coley

THE braggart is a blessing in disguise: without him, the modest man would not shine.

Stuart W. Knight

A MAN who discovers the crimes of the poor is a detective. A man who discovers the crimes of the rich is a muck-raker.

Ellis O. Jones